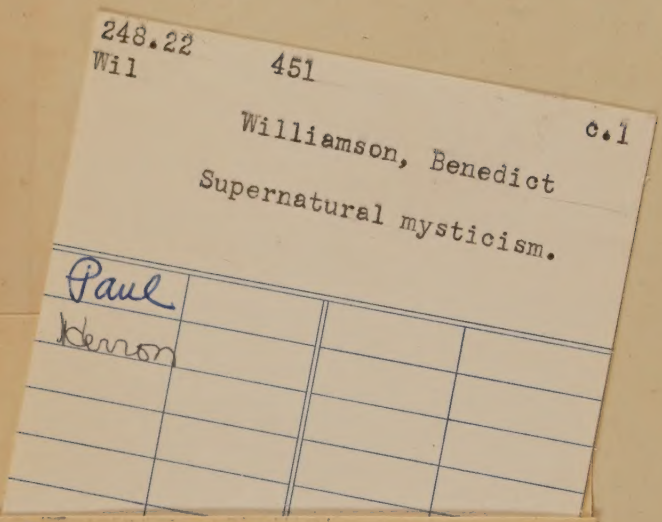

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Supernatural mysticism.

SUPERNATURAL MYSTICISM

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SUPERNATURAL MYSTICISM

BY

BENEDICT WILLIAMSON

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL BOURNE

ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER

AND

A FOREWORD ON THE CALL TO CONTEMPLATION

BY

THE LORD BISHOP OF PLYMOUTH

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MCMXXI

INTRODUCTION

In reading Father Williamson's book *Supernatural Mysticism* I am reminded of two sayings of profound wisdom, which bring home to us the need of ever striving after a closer personal union with God.

The first is found in the sixth chapter of the second book of the following of Christ : *Ambulare cum Deo intus, nec aliqua affectione teneri foris, status est interni hominis* : "To walk with God within, and not to be held by any affection without, is the state of an interior man."

The second comes from the wonderful treatise, too little known in England, of Monsieur Olier, entitled, *Pietas Seminarii Sancti Sulpitii,* which begins with the following words : *Primarius et ultimus finis Seminarii est vivere summe Deo in Christo Jesu Domino nostro.* "The first and last end of the Seminary is to live wholly for God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

With new illustrations of old truths Father Williamson enforces the lesson conveyed in the two sayings just quoted ; and he will undoubtedly help many souls by his written, as he has already done by his spoken, words to realize more clearly the importance as well as the comparative facility of leading lives in closer and more intimate union with their Divine Master.

There are at the present day so many souls, not only among those consecrated to God in the Priesthood and in the Cloister, but among men and women in every rank and position in the world who need only a little encouragement in order to unite themselves more completely to our Lord. By such union not only would their own sanctification be rapidly promoted, but their influence for good upon their own immediate world would also be enormously increased.

The war has taught us much, and has revealed the secrets of many hearts. One such revelation is the craving

for Himself, which our Saviour has aroused so widely and in such unexpected places, with the lessons of self-sacrifice, longing to make atonement, and desire to assist by prayer and intercession the crying needs of the Church and of the world, which the war has made articulate on the lips of those who formerly hesitated to conceive or to utter them.

May God bless the author of *Supernatural Mysticism*, and may many draw light, courage, and perseverance from the reading of its pages.

FRANCIS CARDINAL BOURNE,
Archbishop of Westminster.

ARCHBISHOP'S HOUSE,
WESTMINSTER.
EASTER TUESDAY, MARCH 29TH, 1921.

A FOREWORD

ON

THE CALL TO CONTEMPLATION

Set against the dull background of error and unbelief in this country, the Catholic Faith is really luminous to all. Even unbelievers are quite aware of the vivid apprehension of Religious Truth in Catholic minds, and do not scruple to give the energumen's testimony that if there is a Religion it is with our people. It is a fact witnessed in them all, even in those converted to God at the last, of those accounted as outcast, but whose Faith was only a banked fire. The vagaries of life, the tempest of temptation, even the blight of ignorance have never gone to the roots of the supernatural nor healed over the sabre-cut made in the soul by Baptism. Rarely, very rarely, are our rank and file irreligious however given in crowded centres to latitude of practice. One may even go further. The humility of the Faith is often carried so far that numbers do not recognise —especially those brought up in the Faith—what deeps have been made in their souls by the *Profunda Dei*. They look with wonder on the lives of saints, the heroism of martyrs, the great public ideals of the Church and its importunities. All seems so high to those who are very modest in their spiritual aims, because very unconscious of their own spiritual gifts. Generally such are simply staggered when told that Our Lord is calling them apart to stand with Him. Like Samuel they are sure it is Heli, or the vague atmosphere of human desire. Fortunate are such if some help comes their way—a Priest, a passage in a sermon, a text, an illness, or one devout Holy Communion —to elicit what Coleridge has called "the answering mind." I take it to be the purpose of this book to help just those who are not conscious of the nearness of the Lord.

1. In Catholic life nothing is more natural than this Supernatural. Some of us have a long Catholic lineage, and the consequent heredity, which to-day is a discovery but which has ever been counted upon by the Catholic Church. The Supernatural, as St. Paul says, has got into the joints and marrow and ligatures of the soul. With those converted from irreligion or heresy there is often to be witnessed that extraordinary phenomenon which is as a Pentecostal coming of the Holy Ghost. The joy of the great surprise, soaring purposes, unknown spiritual hankerings reach forth sometimes beyond the hold of prudence as witnessed in St. Paul's converts, and it requires patience, delicacy and real charity to teach such to bear meekly the riches of their grace. All who have taught have seen how Divine Wisdom seems to play with their souls—*ludens in orbe terrarum.*

2. And suddenly one day there comes to Catholics, old or new, a general sense of Our Lord. He pervades. His gracious Form becomes more clearly defined, but He is only there as Sacraments and Prayer are there, and so creates no surprise. Then other things begin to take up a backward position, and make way for Him, and suddenly, as things happen in life, one day the soul awakens to the fact that it has been captured. At first a sense of modesty puts the idea aside, then after much hesitation advice is asked and at last they know. What seemed a ghostly apparition that may not speak, has spoken as hitherto "no man had spoken" by a light, a warmth, a sense of possession. Henceforth Our Divine Lord is sun and moon and stars, and there is just nothing else at all. Yet often the certitude is enveloped in the resentment of all surprise and capture, or in hankerings for the Egyptian flesh-pots, or above all in the deadly fear of a bad bargain, of exchanging an evident known world for things of which we have no experience. But the gentle whisper is always heard. One "stands at the gate and knocks." It is vocation.

3. And He who "fulfils Himself in many ways" and so finds many outlets for the fires within, will in this book perhaps show one form more than another. In all true contemplatives there are signs which cannot be mistaken.

The first is a sort of death. Although the human affections deepen beyond expectation, still Our Lord—chiefly as in connection with the Most Blessed Trinity—drives out all things as far as they may be competitors. It is a real victory, and as a strong man armed He keepeth His court. All that youth likes turns sick or anæmic. The pleasures no longer please ; indeed, one wonders how they could have done so. Ambition goes and novels and theatres and newspapers and gossipy interests and love of notice and of place and fear of suffering. The last mentioned becomes absurd, for mortification is the least of things where there is the sense of possession, joy and alert gladness, and has generally to be checked rather than demanded. The great thing is that all falls away as when in death the soul loses the body. Henceforth the whole earth has only an importance inasmuch as HE shines in upon it with the light of His Face. In the olden days one heard much of the *Fuga Mundi* which all must practice ; but it looks in this case as if the world has already dropped dead at the first vision of Christ

4. Or again, the same Grace appeals in another way and a trying one. It is so general in character, so unspecialised, above all so *simple,* that it has a back stroke. It does not at all follow because of its simplicity that the hold upon Our Lord is vague. For whatever may be thought or said, this hold of Our Lord on the soul is the persistent and dominant reality. The newness of the experience, the timidity of human nature, the difficulty of " carrying on " by ordinary process of meditation and vocal prayer require for many a very clear guidance. Especially one finds in such souls, too, a fact rarely understood—the necessary obscurity of Faith. We quite know from the lives of the saints the great personal certitude they seem to have had of the Presence within them and their surrender to which made their spiritual ways often clearly ascertained ; but for novices in this new life a great discouragement comes, because they think they have no Faith. In reality they imply—what they do not mean—that Faith is experimental knowledge. However, in the course of time all this turmoil settles, and a great peace and substantial joy

irradiate the soul, suffer as it may for many reasons. All this sounds contradictory, but it is always so in appearance with a holy life.

5. It need hardly be said that many have received this grace through their devotion to the most Blessed Sacrament. There is a sense of *saturation* given by it to the frequent Communicant as well as a recognisable conformity to Our Lord. Yet it is a *Sacrament*. It is a passing act and it exists for the sake of union between the Lord and His friends. That union is fed by it, but even as a Presence it is the refuge and home of souls powerless to say what they wish or even to form a desire. It was during its first Celebration Our Lord told souls to abide in Him, and hence it may not be left out with impunity. But still the life of union is its effect, that to which it directly tends. What wonderful help is thus given in these days when Mass, Communion, Exposition, and so many other Eucharistic devotions are common as the field flowers.

No doubt many a soul will be helped by this little book, for many are the prayers with which it is launched. Perhaps they may recognise some signs in themselves of that spiritual life, which they once thought a vague imagination whilst all the time a clear and penetrating whisper from the Lord of Glory.

✠ JOHN, BISHOP OF PLYMOUTH.

OUR LADY OF THE GOOD COUNSEL,
1921.

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PROLOGUE

"THOSE WHO ARE CALLED"

Those souls whom God calls to the life of Supreme union with Himself through the mystical way are found in every place and in every age, in the cloister and in the world, no less in this Twentieth Century in which we live, than in any former time; for His arm is not shortened, and His grace and power effect the same wonderful work in souls to-day that they have ever done in the past, leading them on to that participation in His Divinity which is the final stage of their exile, and the anticipation of its full perfection in the splendid glory of Heaven.

And these souls exist in every state of life, because although the cloister is the better suited to the growth of the soul and her development in supernatural ways, yet mystical experience is by no means limited to those who have been called to the life of consecration to God through the triple vow and separation from all external things, that they may the more securely cleave alone unto Him Who has called them.

For we must remember that the solitude of which the Mystics speak, a solitude necessary if the soul is to attain her end of complete union, is no mere material solitude, but the Interior Solitude of the Spirit. This solitude may exist in the midst of the thronging streets of a great city, and be utterly wanting in the desert of the most secluded cloister that can be found. Indeed, one is struck by the fact that so many souls called to the life of mystic union are found not amongst the dwellers in the quiet country-side, where outwardly everything favours Contemplation, but in the heart of busy cities, where, outwardly at least, everything favours distraction and dissipation.

There are girls in this city of London who, morning by morning, make their journey to their business amidst the crush and struggle of tram and train, who pass through it all, seeing, yet unseeing, so interiorly united to God

that although things strike the external senses, they do not penetrate the soul, or disturb the direction of their spirit to God, and who pass the day's work in the same way, finding in its doing only a means of union with Him, and who return home again at night in like manner as they came in the morning.

Look again at the wonderful interior life of Gemma Galgani, lived in the city of Lucca, in the midst of a large family, where to outward seeming her surroundings little favoured that life of unrelaxing union with God which she led there, a life, I am assured by a very experienced Italian confessor, that, excluding certain extraordinary manifestations in the case of Gemma, is by no means uncommon amongst the women of Italy.

Now, when God leads souls in this way, it is not surprising that oft-times He leads them into the Cloister, where they spend their days in ever-growing union with Himself, until love has become so strong that it breaks the link that binds the soul to this house of our flesh, and speeds her to the fulness of the Divine Life in Heaven. But His Gifts and His Graces are ready for all those who respond to the voice of His calling, dwell they in the Cloister or in the world; for this life is one independent of all outward things, since it is the Kingdom of God established within us, the life that is hid with Christ in God.

And this may well be the reason why the life of mystical union so often exists in surroundings in which we should least expect it; for the soul that is led of the Spirit in this way perceives external things without perceiving them. The outside world necessarily impresses her outward senses, but does not impress itself upon the soul to disquiet her. For instance, sounds strike the ear but do not penetrate with their meaning to the soul, just as a man who is absorbed in reading a book is not disturbed by the noises of others.

Interior solitude, then, is essential for the progress of the soul, for without it the mind will be filled with a multitude of distracting images. Until these pictures, painted by the imagination, and the desires they excite, are stilled and banished, the soul cannot make progress towards that

wonderful Unity with the Divinity for which alone she has been created.

So these conferences, given at Tyburn to the nuns who spend their lives in prayer and adoration before Our Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament on that spot consecrated by the blood of our Martyrs, while addressed primarily to those living the cloistered life, are yet addressed to all souls whom Our Saviour calls to mystical union with Himself through the way of interior prayer and penance.

How striking is the contrast between the roar of traffic without and the silence within that upper room, where through the day with its noise and through the night with its silence, the Adorers of Jesus are ever pleading for His mercy and grace, on the city that is so little conscious of Him and of them.

It may be said, then, seeing that the very end of our existence is to attain this union with God, how is it that the number of those who attain it, in this life, is so small? The answer is not that God does not call, nor that He is sparing of His graces, but that only the few are willing to make the sacrifice which this life demands; for while there is no soul that, perceiving the light of Grace working within her at all would not welcome the peace which this oneness with God bestows, yet the many are unready for the utter detachment from all created things, and finally from themselves, that the way demands. Like the young man in the Gospel, they turn away sorrowful, because, like him, they have great possessions. Perhaps in the material sense their possessions are not great, but however small they may be they are great if they stand in the way of the soul's attainment of her greatest good, and hold her back from that wonderful joy in the peace passing all understanding which He waits to bestow on the soul who is ready to sell all to gain it.

The many are called, and the few chosen, because it is only the few who are ready to pass through that straight gate which requires the total surrender of their whole being to that Lord Who will give Himself wholly to those who will give themselves wholly to Him. It must be the whole, for He will not share the heart of His creatures with another. We must give Him all.

CHAPTER I

OUR END—GOD'S GLORY.

"Lord, teach me to know my end," that is, the reason of my existence, the why and wherefore of my creation, and then, "the number of my days" that I may know what time remains in which to attain it.

We know nothing, however much we may seem to know, if we are ignorant of the purpose for which we have been created and set in this world.

A certain witty Frenchman, after a life of folly, ordered this inscription for his grave :—

> "Here lies the body of a madman, who went out of this world without knowing why he came into it."

And to how many to-day these same words may be applied, for how slow of heart are most, not merely in the knowing, but even in making any effort to know why they are here at all. The many indeed strive to find their satisfaction in created things, endeavouring to build their peace on that which must pass with time; hence, despite the great material progress of the world, the heart of man only manifests an ever-increasing weariness of all those things on which it has been set, in a vain endeavour to satisfy his soul therein.

This heart of ours never can be satisfied with any created thing, because it has been made for something a million times transcending everything on which it can fasten in this world of sense.

Very many of us, even in the days of our youth, begin to realise that all things are passing, all things changing, and only God eternal, and that "this is not the place of our rest." In early years the heart of the child is set on some new toy that has captivated its fancy. "Do give me that: if you will only buy it for me, I shall never want anything else!" And so the parents, to satisfy

the child, give it the desire of its heart; but such is the nature of all human things that with possession comes disillusionment: the child does not find the satisfaction promised by the thing it desired. A few days later, the toy is flung away neglected in a corner; the desires have fastened on some other object that the eyes have beheld; and there is the same eager insistence for the new object that there was for the old.

As children grow in years their desires increase, their eyes take a wider range, ever seeking but never finding in created things that satisfaction for which the heart craves.

The eagerly-looked-for dance that was to have been "the thing" of the season comes and goes, to leave behind only a void, only a feeling of desolation; the first going-out into the great world from the smaller world of school and home brings nothing but fresh occasions of disappointment and disillusionment. Neither can we, even if we would, find our rest in human love and affection.

Look at the family circle united, as thank God, many are still, in the bonds of strong and ardent love, and you say: Surely here is real happiness and peace. And into that circle of innocent gladness comes the angel of death and carries away the best-loved of all, leaving behind only an aching void, that in this world never can be filled. Even when the cup of happiness is at our very lips, how often it is dashed aside as we are about to drink it.

I remember a girl, engaged to a young officer, working at the War Office: they were both devoted to each other in a most wonderful way. One afternoon, as the poor child was getting ready to go to town to meet him, she received a wire calling her to go to him at a London hospital. She went, only to find a corpse; he had been knocked down by a motor, as he crossed Whitehall, and lingered on for only a few minutes. The poor, broken-hearted child, almost mad with the grief that had so suddenly overwhelmed her, had her light turned to darkness, and her joy of life to inexpressible sorrow.

The longer we live, the more completely do we realise that nothing created can bestow peace or lasting happiness. Sœur Thérèse of Jesus, very early in her young

life, had this vividly impressed on her sensitive heart. At school she had become very attached to two of her schoolfellows, and when the holidays were over, she went back with eager longing to meet them again. But when she did so they gave no sign of recognition; they had forgotten they had ever known her; and she realised at once the folly of resting on the changing character of mere human attachment for peace of heart.

No, we are created for God alone, and He is the only One Who can satisfy and fill this poor little heart of ours, so insignificant, so small, and yet so fashioned that it cannot be satisfied with anything less than the Infinite God Himself.

God alone, He only is our true end, and we are blind and foolish indeed if we seek for rest and satisfaction in any other. When we rest our hand for support on creatures we shall only find it pierced by that on which it rests. It is God alone Who will be our strength and stay through all the days of our pilgrimage, and Whose sustaining Hand will never fail us till He brings us safe through the gates of Death to the full possession of Himself, in that Eternity to which He has destined us.

God's glory alone is the one end of our creation, and if day by day we are not giving Him that glory for which we have been given existence, we fail utterly in the very purpose of our presence in this world at all.

And how magnificent our end, since it is none other than God Himself. He has made us for Himself, and so disposed our soul that she can never truly find her rest until she rests in Him.

We are not merely the servants and soldiers of our King, but more, we are also His lovers; and, just as He said in the natural order that there should be "two in one flesh," so is it true in the supernatural order that there shall be "two in one spirit," for "whoso is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him."

But how slowly we learn the lesson, and, even after being disillusioned by the things of time again and again, how ready we are to descend to our attachment to them once more. It is only after many struggles and many tears that we finally wrench ourselves free from their thraldom,

crush our rebellious will into subjection to the Spirit, and find that in God alone there is real and abiding rest and peace. Happy are they who, conquering themselves, attain to this knowledge, however late.

The Glory of God is our only real end, not our own happiness, for this is accidental, although it is true that in giving Glory to God we attain the only true happiness that nothing whatever here below can disturb or touch; but we have to keep this essential fact always before us if we are to advance at all in the supernatural way, and suffer nothing whatever to obscure it.

"Glory be to God on high!" So sang the angels on the first Christmas morn, and "Peace on earth to men of good will." The peace only comes when we give that glory to God for which we are created, and we can only give that glory when every attachment whatsoever is broken. The extent of our attachment to anyone or anything created is the extent to which we fail to give glory to God, because we put some work of His Hand in place of Himself, for our heart is too small to hold God and creatures together within it. In this world all things are changing: everything that *is* is becoming that which *was*, and the thing that *will be* is becoming that which *is*; all future things are passing from the future to the present, and from the present on again to the past.

Time is like one of those blue lakes in North Italy, surrounded with mountains. As you speed across its waters in the boat, the villages and the mountains seem all to be passing; but when you leave the boat and stand upon the shore, you realise you have been moving and that the mountains have been motionless all the while. Time is like a little lake in the midst of eternity.

Every possession here below is shadowed by the fear of loss. Those bound together by the srong ties of love dread separation; nothing is secure, nothing is sure, nothing certain in this world of ceaseless change and variation. See the artist trying to paint the glory of the sunset; paint he never so swiftly, the colours are changing, the glow and the glory are fading; it is so with everything in this world of change.

Only of eternity can we say "*it is*," for time is ever

flowing on like a river, ever changing more swiftly than the colours of sunset. Even the Eternal City changes. You go back after a few years' absence, and how changed it all is : new faces for old, new buildings for old ; everything round you presses deeply on your soul the mutability of all human things.

So we turn from the changing things of time, to the changeless Creator of them all. He never changes, He is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. It is a great thing to have a friend who does not change, but how rarely is one to be found. The friends who do not change are extraordinarily few. We are made for God alone, for a union with Him so intimate that we are to become part of His very Self, since the end of the supernatural life, even in this world, is to make us partakers of His Divinity Who became partaker of our humanity to make it possible.

God gives this Grace to those who will pay the price, and renounce everything for His sake : to these He gives that Eternal Life which hereafter is to be, in its fulness, our everlasting portion. There are moments when the Veil seems worn so thin that we almost see with the Light of the face-to-face vision itself, although they are gone all too quickly. Still in His generous loving-kindness He inclines to our weakness and now and again gives us a foretaste of the glory that is to be. We are made for nothing less than the very possession of God, and His face-to-face beholding with no medium to stand between, because when we see Him we shall see in Him and be so united to Him that we shall love with His love and see with His sight.

The Glory of God is our one end, the sole reason of our presence in this world, and the soul can only give Him this glory when completely freed from the slavery of all things of time and sense. God claims all the love of our hearts —not a part, not a share, but all of it—and our love for creatures is to be a loving of them in Him. We love God for Himself, and all in Him for His sake, not for theirs.

This work, then, is the one essential business of our life, this giving Glory to God by every movement and every action of our soul ; as St. Paul says, "whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God."

All the round of daily work, whatever it is, must be directed to this one end ; this must be our only purpose in doing it. All the words we speak are to be spoken only for the Glory of God ; and if we seek in very truth to glorify God through our speech, we shall be very sparing of our words. So likewise all our thoughts will be directed to that same glory, hence we shall have a restraint on them, that nothing may enter the soul that shall in any way conflict with the Glory she owes to Him. And so ordered, the most ordinary and commonplace occupations of life will shine with the splendour of the Glory of the Lord.

Now the soul that lives for God alone, and does everything for His Glory, differs from others not in the things she does, but in the intention with which she does them. God's Glory governs her every act and word and thought, the doing or the not doing is determined always by this single test. Is it, or is it not for His Glory? The soul so living is fulfilling the purpose of her existence, because she has realised her end and all her movements are directed to its fulfilment. God alone is the beginning and ending of her existence. His Glory alone is the motive of her whole life, of all her actions, great and small, whatever she does, whatever she says, whatever she thinks : it is all for Him alone.

And in giving this Glory to God, as it is the one end of her being, so she also attains a happiness that surpasses all the happiness of earth, as the light of the sun surpasses the light of the candle. Moreover, this happiness is constant and changeless, because it rests not on the ever-changing things of time, but on the changeless Creator Himself : and the restless soul finds her rest at last in the Arms of God. Finding in Him her end, she finds also in Him her joy and her peace, and these cannot change, because He cannot change.

CHAPTER II

OUR WAY—GOD'S WILL

God's Glory is the one end of our existence, to give Him this glory in everything, at every time, in every place, this is to attain our end.

Now we can only attain this end by following the Way of His Most Holy Will. Nothing whatever that happens in this world, whether it be the fall of a sparrow or the fall of a kingdom, happens without God's Will; His Will extends alike to the smallest and the greatest; He rules the rush of a million suns through space and He rules every trifling incident that befalls us in our daily life, from the first moment when we come into this world, to the last moment when we go out of it.

There are times when this world seems a mystery to which there is no key—a puzzle to which there is no solution, because things happen that so absolutely overwhelm and confound us, that we cannot perceive how, or in what way, we can reconcile them with His love, His mercy and His goodness.

Now, God's Will is both absolute, and permissive, and everything that does not happen by His Absolute Will, befalls through His permissive will; so that nothing whatever can happen in the world that does not fall under the control of God's Will in one way or the other.

God fore-sees every single thing that shall happen in my life and in the life of everyone who shall live on this earth till the day of doom, all that I shall think, and do, and say, this day, and every day of my life until the last day of all. He knows every possible way in which my life might have been disposed of if the events and circumstances had been other than they are, also the results that would have flowed from them. Knowing all this, He permits that to happen which in fact comes to pass, and as His fore-seeing is guided by His All-merciful-goodness we know that the things that actually do befall us are best, and

that whatever they may seem to be, they are the manifestation of His Loving-kindness towards us. However great the suffering these happenings inflict, they are disposed and permitted by the Hand of Supreme Love. He will, out of all the inexplicable tangle of life, with all its apparent evil, bring a greater good, and after we have passed from this waiting-room of time into the splendid Palace of Eternity, we shall see that every blow that fell upon us was one that shaped us for Heaven, snapped the chains that bound us to the things of earth, hammered the love of God into us, and fitted us for perfect union with Himself.

Our work is to bring our will into conformity with His, because without oneness of Will there can be no Union, and until we have attained that, we can never possess the peace which He came from Heaven to give us.

Well, you must often have heard it said during the late War: "How can God permit it to go on? Why does He allow it? If He has the power, why does He not stop it? Where is His mercy, where His compassion, that He allows this incredible horror, with all its cruel torture of humankind to go on?" How often throughout the ages, in times of great anguish and distress, has the same cry been heard before?

We cannot measure the things of Eternity by the things of time: but this we know, that if through this war one single soul that else had never entered in made a straight way to Heaven, then, all the anguish and pain of this awful conflict was worth while. We cannot measure the value of a single soul gaining everlasting life against the greatest temporal suffering, because there can be no possible comparison.

And we are assured that not one soul only, but a great multitude, have sped from the Battlefields of Earth to the glory of Heaven: they knew that death was near, they prepared for it with all their faculties about them, and death found them ready to answer to the call.

They offered up their sufferings in trench and battle-line, in union with their Lord, they accepted with generous heart whatever His Will for them might be, and He has crowned and perfected them in a short while and made them worthy of Himself.

The measure of our love of God is the measure of our conformity to His Will. It is true that you can have conformity without love, but you cannot have love without conformity. It may be that some souls with little love will after a desperate struggle say: God's Will be done. But the soul that loves greatly will always welcome that Will, no matter what the pain and anguish it may inflict, she will rejoice in His Will because she loves, and the stronger her love the more absolute her joy.

But we do not readily attain this one-ness of Will with Him; our will is not easily bent and shaped to God's. It is only after many struggles, that we come to see, that in the total and entire surrender of our whole will to His, we can really find peace.

How long it takes for us to realise, that God's will supreme over all, is our one true happiness.

When we are young and impetuous we want to incline God's Will to ours, rather than bend ours to His. We see some work or thing that we feel is for His Glory,—for I am only speaking of those souls that are trying to make the Glory of God the beginning and ending of their lives,—well, we see this, and are inclined to say to Him: "Lord, You must do this thing; it is for Your Glory alone we ask it. You must do it." To prayer so urgent and insistent God has, as it were, bound Himself, and frequently, because of our insistence, He has given us a lesser good than He would have done, if we had prayed for His Will to be done alone, without any condition. And how often, not so long after the gift we had sought so imperiously from His hand has been given, would we, with tenfold greater eagerness, have prayed back into His Hands that which He had bestowed, because that which we had hoped for from the gift has not been realised. This befalls not once, but many times. ere the lesson He would teach us sinks deep down into our heart, and out of our anguish we say to Him, "Lord, henceforth only one prayer shall speed forth from these lips of mine, Thy Holy Will be done. And if I see something which I indeed believe is in truth for Thy Glory, this only will I pray, Lord, if this is for Thy Glory, then grant it, but if not, root out from my heart every desire for it; even

though my heart be crushed and bleeding by the refusal, yet Lord, in mercy deny it and do not spare me."

It is only by the hard way of experience, that we reach thus far, on the way of conformity to God's Will, but when we have gained this point, I do not say we have entered, but we have begun to enter, into the peace and liberty of the children of God.

Such conformity is only possible with love, for love alone makes the impossible possible, and the stronger the love, the greater the ease with which our will will be conformed to our Lord's. Now this Will comes to us under two aspects : the one *active,* the other *passive.*

The Will of God under its *active* aspect implies the free deliberate choice of one way rather than another, when two ways stretch out before us and we have the liberty to embrace either.

The choice of vocation is such, a free act of our will. We have heard His call to leave all and enter the cloister, and we have responded to that call. We had the power to say Yes or No, to choose the lower way rather than the higher, because the religious state is the following not of the commandments, but of the counsels.

And so there are crucial moments in our lives when we have to take a step forward that must affect the course of all our future days, and with the Light His Spirit gave, we have chosen that which we believe to be most in accordance with His Will and in which we shall give the greatest glory to Him.

And then, even after, there are many occasions of lesser choice, when we can choose one way, rather than another, and when, perceiving that out of two ways, the one will be more pleasing to Him than the other, we choose the way that will please Him most. When in doubt, we may easily find the solution, by choosing that to which nature inclines the least.

So far, then, we seem to have some share, in the choice of God's Will, but after all, these opportunities are few compared with the occasions, when we must accept His Will, whether we like it or not, when His Will comes to us ready-made, if I may say so, when our part is the only acceptance of that Will as

manifested in circumstances altogether beyond our control. We must suffer, whether we will or not, but whether we shall suffer and glorify God, by a will entirely conformed to His, or whether we shall suffer, in murmuring and rebellion against His disposition of things, that remains within our own power.

Then we may feel most sure of His Will, because we have not *chosen,* but *accepted;* ours has been the *passive* part. All comes directly from Him, and will either draw us closer to Him or drive us farther from Him, according as we embrace and accept it with loving submission or refuse to give Him what He asks.

And the Glory of God is so bound up with His Will, that it is impossible to give Him the one without the other, for His Glory is His Will and His Will is His Glory.

How utterly overwhelming and crushing, how heart-breaking and blinding is that Will to us sometimes, when we are stunned by its suddenness, broken by its weight, crushed by its power : yet, "His Holy Will be done though the heavens fall." This must be the cry that rises from our heart to Him : "It is the Lord : let Him do what pleaseth Him."

We wonder that men go on their way unheeding, we wonder the sun shines, when the iron has thus entered our soul and torn out of our life everything that made life anything to us at all ; but our will rises triumphant and responsive to His, even then, and says : "Lord, this will break my heart, but then, Lord, it is Yours to break if You will." This is Love Divine triumphing in the soul over her human weakness, and drawing her onward to Divine Union.

This absolute conformity to His Will must extend to everything ; we must hold nothing back from the completeness of the sacrifice, for Love manifests itself in Sacrifice, and our love of Our Lord manifests itself in the entire immolation of our will to His, until we come to that union of Love, in which although there are still two wills, ours and His, there is only one operation, and that is His.

Then again, we must have complete conformity to His Will in all the natural alternations of heat and cold, rain

and shine, calm and tempest, for they are all under the absolute domination of His Will, and so we should accept in these things whatever He sends with equal spirit, having only His pleasure before us, and receiving with joy whatever that pleasure may be.

What sufferings on the Battle front; and how uncomplainingly borne, the cold, the mud, the misery; entirely apart from shells and bombs and ever-present danger; and yet, was there ever before a place where so much glory was given to God?

One dear boy, who realised very fully the nothingness of all earthly things, sped swiftly along the way to perfection out there on the desolate stretches of the Somme Valley. Parched with thirst, he offered it to his Lord in union with His thirst on Calvary; worn and exhausted by the weight of his pack, he rejoiced in the suffering, because it enabled him to share with his Lord in the carrying of His Cross. His last letter made me realise that the time of his departure was at hand: "Pray God," he wrote, "that I may give Him the greatest glory a creature can out of the work He has given me to do out here." He fell a few days later, in the Great Offensive of 1916. His work on earth was finished; in a short while he had attained to the highest perfection possible on this side of the veil, and so his Lord called him from the midst of the battle strife of earth to the splendid peace of Heaven.

Yes, that war, to the eye of the natural man so terrible, so revolting in all its ghastly horror, will, when we see it in the light of God's Eternity, bear a different aspect. We shall see that those years were five glorious years, five years that swelled the ransomed host in Heaven, five years in which souls moved with amazing swiftness along the road to perfection, because they rose to such a height of self-sacrifice as they would never have attained in the more ordinary ways of life.

Everything is all right, because God is doing His own work, in His own way. There are times when we wonder what He is about. As a dear child said to me once: "God is the most extraordinary Person out, I never know what He is going to do next." And that is exactly true:

we never do know, what He is going to do next; but this we know, as He said to Juliana of Norwich: "All is well. I shall make all to be well; and you shall see that I shall make all to be well." True, at times, we find it hard indeed to realise that all is well, because all our calculations are upset, all our ideas of His working confounded by what He does, but through it all we say: His Will alone, His Will how He wills, His Will as long as He wills, His Will in the way He wills, simply and solely because it is His Will.

The soul, thus disposed, stands ready to accept whatever He is pleased to send, thinks nothing of herself, nothing of her own pain, but only longs that His Will may be perfectly done in her, whether by sickness or health, life or death, success or failure, rejoicing that His Will is supreme over all, and desiring that it may be accomplished in her, to the fullest extent possible, in this land of exile.

Sometimes we are stricken down with sickness just at a most critical moment, when absorbed in works for Him, and it seems "the most impossible thing out"; but the soul knows that all is well, and that at this moment her Lord will be more glorified by her sickness than by any active work she could do for Him; for if it was otherwise, she would have health and not sickness.

And then there is the failure of works we have undertaken for Him, or they seem to fail, at least, in the way we expected them to succeed. Well, we lay down work for Him with the same readiness with which we took it up. This is the test, after all, that proves whether we have in truth been all for Him; for if something of self has become blended with that which should have been all for Him, we shall feel resistance; but if it has been indeed all for Him, we shall as readily lay it down as we took it up for Him. I do not say that we shall suffer nothing, at least in the inferior part of our soul, but the superior part will remain in peace, if we have only the desire of His good pleasure within us.

Some years ago a poor man lay dying in abject misery in a top garret in Bermondsey: his poor body covered with vermin lay on the few miserable rags that served for a bed. The priest came bringing His Lord to him for the

last time, and that soul died praising God for His goodness in coming to him. And at the very same time, a rich man lay dying in the West of London, surrounded by nurses and every luxury that might in any way minister to his comfort and ease his pain, and he died, cursing God, because He would not give him another hour to live. What a contrast between these two, great as that between Dives and Lazarus, wide apart as Heaven and Hell.

And then again, conformity to God's Will in that hardest circumstance of all—at least as regards our comprehension of it—when the sufferings God sends are inflicted on us by the hands of the good. From the world we look for it, from the good it is hard to understand; and yet how often do we find that it is the good who afflict the good. Well, we have to look straight through the human instruments to God Himself; it is He Who sends the cross, it is He Who inflicts the wound: so we must realise that they are only instruments, which permissively or absolutely He uses to draw us nearer to Himself. For them we must pray more abundantly, that He may bless them, because of the favours they have given us; for we owe them a special gratitude, since they have been the means of giving us a special cross, and, therefore, a special opportunity of more entire conformity to the Divine Will, and a more complete liberation from our clinging to aught here below.

And above and beyond all these, there are those interior sufferings, which surpass all those that come from without; those times of utter darkness and desolation, so intense, so piercing and so agonising, that unless, in His mercy, His Hand shortened them, we could not live through them.

All other sufferings are light compared with these, and yet, the soul cleaves to Him but the closer in the darkness: "the deep waters have come in, even unto my soul," the light of Heaven seems put out, and He, the Love of her life seems to have left her, to perish in this darkness.

Here, too, the soul only cries: "It is His will; His will, Holy and adorable, be perfectly done in me; as long as the Will of Him I love be done, I count all else as naught. Let Him do what He wills with His own, I belong wholly to Him."

There are mysteries of suffering that never will be cleared

up in this world, nor ever fully known, because words are lacking in which to describe them : but, all the same, we know everything is all right.

And then sometimes, just after a staggering and overwhelming sacrifice has been demanded of us, and we have given it gladly and willingly for His love, a small trifle will throw us down, a few sharp words and we are in revolt. How our miserable weakness becomes known to us then, and that really, we without Him can do nothing. After all, no word can be spoken without Him. He knew before exactly what was going to be said, when and how it would be said. I know there are days when contradictions and crosses follow one another so fast that we feel we have reached "the very limit" ; but it is all from Him and we must bear it all for Him, even if it is "the limit" and beyond. Then, again, there are moments when we feel sick and impatient with ourselves, our own meanness, our miserable failure, in some small trifle, to conform our will to His. He is glad we feel like that, for the more we realise our miserable nothingness, the more we shall realise His All-sufficiency.

We must never relax, never grow weary in this great work of utter and absolute conformity to God's Holy Will ; we must suffer no moment of impatience to spoil the completeness of our union with Him. If we perceive trouble and disquiet in the superior part of our soul, well, however slight it may be, we may be sure of this, that in some point, be it ever so small, our will and His are not in perfect harmony, because as long as our will remains one with His, nothing can trouble the peace of our soul.

And how amazingly careful is He of us ; "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and yet not one of them shall fall to the ground without the Will of My Father,"—not one of them—just the value of half a farthing—and then He adds, for our comfort, "ye are worth more than many sparrows," and again, He gives the assurance that the very hairs of our head are numbered, and not one of them shall perish without His Will.

Yes, He made us for the praise of His Glory : He loves us with an everlasting love, and He keeps us by His Divine Power. Sometimes, watching the Tyrolese

Sculptor working at the block of wood, I have wondered at the skill which directed each blow: first the rough shaping with the axe, and the blows descend with shattering force; then the axe is laid aside for the chisel; finally the small graving tools, till the finished statue comes forth from the master's hands.

True, many a blow seemed struck at random, and the unskilled onlooker felt inclined to say, "Don't do that, you will spoil it." But the workman knew what he was about. The shaping of that statue is a picture of the way in which God works on the soul, to fit her for union with Himself.

Almighty God knows exactly what He is about; He knows exactly what each stroke will do. It is all well. As we look back on life, how clearly His purpose becomes manifest, how some of the most shattering and heart-breaking blows that have fallen upon us have shaped us to His Will, and even in this world we can see that "He does all things well," or at least realise in some measure the reason hidden at the time, but revealed as His designs on our souls are slowly unfolded.

God's Will, then, must become our very life; our soul must live in an attitude of ready acceptance of whatever His good pleasure may demand of us. Of course we are flesh and blood; we suffer and agonise. But it is through this agony, through this dying to everything on earth, that we come to possess His peace, and enter into the glorious liberty of the children of God. Once this conformity, this oneness of will between us and Him has been established, we have attained to true freedom, because, then, nothing can possibly befall us that can ever disturb our union with Him; seeing His Will alone operates in us and our will is lost in His.

CHAPTER III

OUR MEANS—GOD'S GRACE

Our end is God alone, the glorifying of His name, by a life of union with Him, through the absolute conformity of our will to His. The attainment of this end, through the complete conquest of our whole nature and its total subjection to His Will, is a work so difficult that it is absolutely impossible without supernatural aid.

We know the end—the Glory of God. We see the way —entire conformity to His Will; but to tread that way and gain that end, unless we are aided, is entirely beyond our strength.

Just as there is the end to be attained, and the way along which we must go to attain it, so likewise there is the means to help us along that way: and that means is God's Grace —the indwelling within us of the Living Spirit Who helps our infirmities and gives our stammerings utterance, and out of weakness makes us strong.

The Gift of supernatural Grace is a replanting within us of that supernatural life which has been destroyed by sin. "Except ye be born again of water and the Spirit ye cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven." It is, therefore, a spiritual re-birth, by the incoming of the Holy Ghost into the soul; just as the indwelling of our natural spirit is the life of the body, so is the indwelling of the Holy Ghost the Life of our soul.

The only thing that is of the slightest consequence is this, that we save our soul and make a straight way to the Heavenly Country: everything else is really a matter of indifference, for all other things are of merely passing moment, but this is of eternal consequence. We may be the greatest failures out, as this world regards failure, and yet be the most supreme success in the sight of God. Failure and success will ultimately be judged not by man's standard, but by God's. That is what Grace shows us.

How does Grace find us? Poor wrecks indeed, for

original sin has blinded our intellect and weakened our will very thoroughly, at least, as regards the only thing that matters.

Grace is a supernatural gratuitous Gift, given us by God, that we may obtain life everlasting.

The very smallest stirring of grace which we have ever received is one that we could not by any conceivable effort of ours claim as a right: it comes to us as the absolutely free Gift of God, purchased for us by the life-blood of His Son. The work of the Spirit has to do in the soul, is to transform her into the very life of God Himself; that is the end of His operation.

The Holy Spirit has a two-fold work to accomplish: to give supernatural eye-sight to the Intellect and supernatural strength to the Will. The result of original sin is this, that the soul's understanding is so blinded and her will so weakened that she can neither see what she must do, nor do what she sees must be done, unless the quickening Spirit Himself enter in with His Own Almighty power, and enable her both to see and to do.

"Lord that I may see," prays the soul; and again: "Send out Thy light and Thy truth that they may lead me"; she cannot behold Eternal Truth unless the light of the Holy Spirit shines within to enlighten her.

The soul is blinded in a three-fold way, first by the pleasures, then by the riches, and finally by the cares of this world, and unless supernaturally liberated from all three, she cannot enter into the way of Life.

Pleasures blind the soul, first of all in the ordinary sense of the word. This is particularly true of the young; the circle of delights that gratify the senses appear to them the only thing worth living for, and even when the Spirit has begun His work in the soul and they begin to realise the vanity of things, how much yet remains to be done, how many the purgations, ere the Divine Union is attained.

Riches, just because they are more gross, more material, and more sordid, blind and captivate the soul far more completely than pleasure. The mere pleasure-lover is more easily awakened than the one immersed in material gain. There was a millionaire, some years ago, terribly distressed because he feared his money would not last out his life, and

consequently he would have to forego some of his luxuries. Such is the blinding effect of material riches. The first work of the Spirit is to awaken the soul to the utter nothingness of mere material wealth; but there is much more to do besides this. The Spirit's work is to lead the soul on till she sees that it is only through the total surrender, not merely of material wealth, but also of such wealth of mind and imagination as she possesses, and of all that is not God, that she can possess the true wealth of the Kingdom.

Cares, too, press down the soul—cares about material things, cares as to the means of providing for the future, for one's children, for one's own sustenance. Some are so crushed with care that they can never look up. If things are well to-day, they are convinced they will be ill to-morrow: care-worn and anxious as they are, the Spirit has much work to let the Light in and enable them to cast all their care upon that Lord Whose care for them is a thousand times greater than all the care they can take for themselves.

Look at the action of the Holy Ghost, as the first touch of awakening Grace acts upon the soul; in an instant the veil that hides eternal reality from her sight is torn away. At once she sees things as they really are, realises that the goods of earth on which she had set her heart are simply nothing. In the Light of that shewing Earth's pleasures and treasures are estimated at their true value and for the first time she realises her own end: she was not made for the life of this insignificant little world, she is not the creature of a day, but of eternity, made for Everlasting Union with God Himself.

There was a young child passing one of our London Churches, just casually she turned in to pray, and as she knelt, the Light of the Spirit shone in her soul and she came out of that Church entirely transformed. The round of society pleasures that had hitherto filled her life became as nothing. She began a new life of the Spirit and left the things of earth behind her.

And again in a city not far away there was another child just living for the pleasures of the moment, for the things of sense. In an instant, the Light of the Spirit comes,

and she is transformed from the life of the world to the life of the spirit. Pleasures are all cast aside, and now she is living a life of prayer and penance that the world knows not, which is yet very precious in the eyes of God.

Such is the action of the Spirit, giving "sight to the blind," drawing souls from the shadows of time to the realities of eternity.

But it is not enough to see unless we receive likewise strength to do: this will of ours must receive supernatural strength in order that it may act. Again and again we meet people who see perfectly well what they ought to do, yet have not the will to do it. Frequently it has been said to me: "Oh I see quite well the Catholic religion is the right one, but I can't take the step, I can't face it." And how often God calls the soul to tread a particular way, but the will is wanting, and so there is no response to the call. We see this, even in children: they have some medicine to take, and medicine is nearly always bitter, or at least unpleasant. They know they ought to take it, but the will is weak. "I can't take it!" But at length, after much persuasion, it is done. Well, there is plenty of bitter medicine in life, and if only we take it courageously, it will do our soul good, once it is down.

Grace takes hold of the will and makes it strong to act, so that what it cannot do naturally it can do supernaturally. Strength of will—I mean the natural will—varies immensely in different people. Some have a will naturally strong and reliant, and others have a will as weak as water.

You see a child with a strong will, and you know he will be either Saint or Devil. He will serve God or the Devil, and whichever it is, it will be with all his might. All the great things wrought in the world, whether for good or evil, have been wrought by a strong will. Grace makes the weak will strong, renews, re-creates and transforms it, but when Grace has a will already strong upon which to operate, despite much resistance such a soul will be swiftly carried to perfection.

There is no height of sanctity to which that soul may not attain, who places herself passively in the Divine Hands and leaves the Spirit to work His Will in her.

Look at the Apostles themselves, see how weak they

were naturally, shrinking from suffering, terrified by danger, wanting even in many natural qualities and virtues, so that we are inclined to wonder at the Divine Choice, and say, were these indeed the best the Lord could find on the earth to be His Apostles? Yet He chose them, weak and wanting as they were, with their narrow outlook that, after three years with God tabernacled in the flesh, remained as narrow as ever, their self-love so strong, that when He was going to His Death, they could only dispute about the place they were going to occupy in His Kingdom. That Kingdom was small enough as they conceived it; even after His Resurrection they could only rise to the restoration of the poor little temporal Kingdom of Israel. He chose them just as they were, in order that the work might be more completely and manifestly His Own, and void of any merely human aid to its success.

But behold the contrast when the Spirit came on that wonderful morning when they were all together in that upper room "for fear of the Jews." The burning fire of the Holy Ghost entered their souls and possessed them, transformed them in such a manner that we cannot recognise them as the same men. The outward flame was the token of the Mighty Indweller that had wrought the marvellous change. The "fear of the Jews" vanishes; they speak the word with boldness; they are scourged and tortured and rejoice at it; they face kings and rulers unafraid; they go everywhere preaching the word and finally seal their witness in their blood. How the Spirit has swept out of their souls all their narrow little views of the Kingdom of Israel: what zeal, what greatness of heart, what bigness of vision they now possess, for the Holy Ghost is their sight, they see with His seeing, speak with His Power, act with His might. The wondrous transformation that the Spirit wrought in them He has been working in all souls of good will from that day to this.

How extraordinary it is that so many people are so satisfied with their defects, whereas the only satisfaction they ought to feel is in getting rid of them. One says, as if it were a matter for congratulation: "Oh, I know I have a temper." Quite needless affirmation; everyone else knows it only too well. There is nothing to boast of in

having a temper: the only thing worth mentioning is having got rid of it. Others say: "Oh, it is my nature." Yes, it is nature, but what we want is supernature. The work of the Holy Spirit is to destroy the work of the Devil: if we have a temper, to take it away; if we have a defect, to remove it; if we have faults, to overcome them. There are no limits to the work of the Spirit in our souls, except the limits we place ourselves.

Grace is both *actual* and *habitual*. *Actual* Grace is a transient favour of the Spirit, God's assistance for some definite act. *Habitual* or abiding Grace is the permanent indwelling of the Spirit in the soul, God's assistance for a life; this goes on increasing until the soul is so wholly united with God, that all her actions become Divine.

A civilian wants to enter the army. He must enlist. By the act of enlisting he changes his state of life. He is no longer a civilian, but a soldier, and a soldier's law binds him. What enlistment is to soldiering, actual Grace is to habitual Grace. This actual Grace of Baptism makes us God's soldiers; we enter on a new state of life, just as the recruit does. A deliberate act of sin, and our state is again changed; we become God's deserters. An act of contrition re-instates us; we are God's soldiers once more.

Many actual graces are given during the course of our pilgrimage; they are God's calls to promotion. Each one if rightly responded to, intensifies the supernatural life of the soul, until she comes to that amazing union of mystical marriage, by which she is transformed fully and completely into the Divinity.

But too often the story of the soul is not one of continual progress, but of many risings and fallings, the pitiful tale of many actual graces rejected; it is strange but true that the soul can resist the Spirit. St. Paul says: "Receive not the grace of God in vain," and again: "Resist not the Spirit"; how true it is that, not once but many times, the Spirit has called and the soul held back; and the Grace that should have been hers has been lost for ever; lost grace never returns.

There are other graces she may gain in the future: but the graces that have gone, these can never come back; the past is irrevocable, and nothing we can do can ever change

it. Who shall say what the loss of a single grace may mean, not only to the soul that loses it, but to other souls as well. No soul lives or dies to herself, we are all acting and re-acting on each other; the loss of one single grace by one soul may bring with it loss to unnumbered other souls besides.

What small things God uses and what surprising people He chooses on whom to bestow His Graces, and in whom to work His will.

How unlikely a person seemed the young soldier, Ignatius Loyala, his mind filled with the thoughts of chivalry and worldly advancement, to be the founder of a great religious order. And yet, God has His designs on him, all through those youthful days when his heart was captivated by the glamour of transitory things.

God's time came, in the midst of his warlike career he is stricken down, and carried wounded to the neighbouring castle. Then, as he approaches convalescence he looks around for something to read; the only book that house contains is a book of the "Lives of the Saints": I wonder if there be a house in England to-day of which such a thing could be said? The book is brought, but it is not what he wants, and the volume is thrust impatiently aside. It was those Romances of Chivalry and Love for which Spain was so famous that he sought.

The days of his helplessness run on, and to relieve the monotony of their passing, even the lives of the saints became bearable; so at length the despised book is picked up and he begins to read. And as he reads, the Spirit speaks to him through that book. He is inspired by those stories of the saints and their triumph over flesh and blood. Here is set before him a nobler ideal than he had ever dreamed of before.

He says to himself: "All these saints were men like myself; their faith is my faith; their God my God; the grace that was theirs is also mine; what they did through its aid that I can do likewise. I, too, will be a saint."

How much is owing to that one small circumstance, the absence of the books he desired, the presence of the one he did not; but for that there might have been no St. Ignatius and no Society of Jesus, carrying the Cross of the

Lord to triumph in every land. There was a great heart and generous beneath that worldly exterior, and God, Who sees not as man sees, beheld it and knew how generous a response that heart would give once it was quickened by His Grace. And he is generous : nothing less than being a Saint will satisfy him. He must give all : so he goes forth to solitude, there to begin that life of sacrifice and utter surrender, that abandonment of all for God, which is the key-note of the Spiritual Exercises, by which he seeks to lead the soul above all created things to God alone.

How strange a notion the world has of those who embrace the cloistered state. It thinks of them as being driven there by some crushing failure, broken by some cruel disappointment, and as turning thither to find a shelter in which to hide their grief. True, sometimes it may be thus that God brings the soul to a knowledge of herself, but often it is the young girl thrilling with the joy of life, to whom earth seems to have offered the cup of pleasure to the full, that in the midst of it all, much to the world's surprise, exchanges all it has to give for the austere life of the Cloister. And she hastens there just when life seems fullest, because her's is a big generous heart, hidden may be beneath the glitter of a worldly life ; once Grace has stirred it, nothing less than All can satisfy it. She must give all to the All for her ardent love can do no less. That is a spirit you never find in mediocre people, who say : "Oh, I am quite satisfied if I can just squeeze into Heaven somehow at last" ; they never know the stirring of that ardent eager nature, caught up and transformed by the touch of Grace into a passionate zeal for God.

Look at St. Paul on the way to Damascus : his unsatisfied zeal must pursue the followers of the Lord, even to strange cities ; he cannot rest content with what he has done in Jerusalem, he must labour against them wherever they are found.

But as he is in the way he falls to the earth, a light shines about him and he hears the voice of that Lord against whom he strives saying : "I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest." Forthwith the persecutor becomes the Disciple, and that great generous spirit must traverse the earth, 'stablishing everywhere that which once he destroyed.

Bearing always in his body the marks of Jesus, in shipwrecks, in scourgings, in sufferings, in conflicts of every sort, his life of burning service speeds on, a life of which his own description is : "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." His love of the brethren of the house of Israel was such that he was ready, like another Moses, to be anathema that they might be saved. He is the great doctor of the mystical life, and he traces with clear vision the life of the soul in her ascent to God, her terrific struggles, her darkness and suffering, till she is finally lost in the Divinity. It is from St. Paul that all mystical writers of succeeding ages have drawn their inspiration, turning to him as the great Master and exponent of the life that is hid with Christ in God.

When we mark how his great figure dominates the early church, and see his restless, never-tiring energy, the fiery love, the burning eloquence, the indomitable will and unflinching courage, we are inclined to marvel at God's choice of St. Peter rather than St. Paul as the Head of the Church. St. Peter was impetuous and loving, but weak and vacillating, and his courage failed altogether at the crucial moment despite all his protestations. To such questioning St. Paul, himself, has given the answer : "God hath chosen the weak things of this world, yea, the things that are not, to bring to naught the things that are" ; and again : "His strength is made perfect in our weakness." God willed to show the transforming power of His Grace. All absolutely, all depends on that Divine Power by which weakness becomes strength, frailty, fortitude, fear, courage. The St. Peter after Pentecost and the one before, seem to be two different men, as indeed they are ; the one is St. Peter alone with his human weakness, the other is St. Peter one with the Almighty Power of God.

The Holy Ghost is working to-day with the same resistless might as in the first ages of the Church, making Saints out of most unlikely material even in this spiritually frozen England of ours ; His touch gives the quickening life of the Spirit just as truly as it has even done in the past. God has, in this our land, even in this our day, souls leading lives of prayer and penance every whit as wonderful and supernatural as those of any former age.

The soul must be attentive to those inspirations of the Spirit within her; to perform some act of charity, to pray for some particular soul, or to do some particular work. We cannot tell what may depend on, or what result from these motions of Grace, both for the soul herself and for others; when He speaks, the soul must act.

About thirty years ago, a young priest fresh from the seminary entered into conversation with a boy as he was walking down Oxford Street, and their conversation turned upon religion. When they separated, he gave the boy a copy of Cardinal Gibbons' "Faith of Our Fathers." The boy came back to my office rather excited over the gift, more concerned with its size than its contents, and brought it to shew me. I casually turned over the pages, with no particular interest, when some words arrested my attention: "There are some who call themselves Catholics amongst themselves, but no one else ever thinks of calling them so." Those few words made an impression never afterwards effaced, and for the first time the bare possibility of the Catholic Church being right entered my mind. It was the first step on a long journey: but if that young priest had not responded to the inspiration of the moment I might never have begun the journey.

There was a friend of mine, member of a religious Community in the Anglican Church, whose soul was tossed and troubled with doubts about his position; so being left alone one morning he determined to go down to the Public Library and read—I think it was—Cardinal Newman's "Apologia." He set out down Victoria Street and as he was on his way two little children about six years of age stopped abruptly before him and said: "We's catholics, do you hold with the Catholics?" The strangeness of the incident impressed him very strongly: he went his way, but all through the day those words of the children ran through his mind like a refrain. Out of the mouths of children the Spirit speaks.

God is ever inspiring us both to will and to do; His Spirit living within is ever prompting, guiding, directing, calling us onwards to the life of perfect union and oneness with His Very Self.

I know people say in these days: "Oh, it was all right

in the thirteenth century: things were different then." It is all right now, in the twentieth century. Human nature is the same, God's love is the same, our soul is the same.

His Call is the same. We are all called to be saints—not half-saints—but saints. We must give God something, then why not give Him everything? On this most glorious spot on which you pray, how the very place itself inspires you with the desire to give Him everything, like those who suffered here. Do not the very stones themselves cry out: "You must be saints." How those martyrs rejoiced as they went like Brides to their wedding, overflowing with joy that their Lord had so likened them to Himself as to grant them a share in His Passion. You remember the one who was already suspended on the gibbet when the rope gave way and he fell from the scaffold; picked himself up at once and ran back to his place again, saying: "If you had seen that which I have seen, you had made as great haste to be there as I."

You have a glorious inspiration, a splendid heritage. All that the Holy Ghost wrought so marvellously in them He can likewise work in you, and if the day for martyrdom returns once more, I doubt not, martyrs will go to their coronation with the like joy, as those who have gone the self-same way before.

See how St. Paul speaks to those who every moment expected to be haled to torture and to death: "Rejoice, and again I say rejoice." In truth there seemed little to rejoice at from a human point of view: yet the note of those first centuries was that of joy. Men and women exulted in suffering and rejoiced in torments, they regarded martyrdom as the splendid crown of their life, so much so, that they grieved as at a mark of Divine disfavour if one of them should be denied this sign of conformity to the Lord.

Theirs is indeed the Triumph of the Spirit over the weakness of the flesh, manifested alike in men and women, boys and girls, whose song of joy rises from the gibbet and the fire and glorifies their swift passage to eternity.

As we behold them, it may well be, we feel that we are nothing, and knowing our own nothingness, we may have a

good hope that the Holy Ghost will make us something, because there will be nothing in us to oppose His work within.

We must become Saints, that is our calling; nothing hinders our attaining sanctity—save our own unwillingness to respond to God's Grace.

CHAPTER IV

GOD'S CREATION

To attain the life of union with God, through the way of His Holy Will, by the means of His Holy Grace, this, and this alone, is the one reason of our existence. The Glory we owe to Him can only be given completely in Heaven, where we shall be, by Divine Union, sharers in His Nature. On earth that glory is given in the most perfect degree possible when we have so utterly and wholly abandoned ourselves to His Good pleasure that we have neither will nor desire apart from Him, and rest in an attitude of loving attention, that is not alone one of conformity, but of uniformity of our will with His. This state, seemingly impossible to nature, is attainable through Grace.

God created the world and man, man fell, and Christ redeemed him. These three acts, the Creation, the Fall, and the Redemption are bound up with the subjects we have been considering—Creation directs our attention to its end—God's Glory; the Fall explains why it is so hard to bring our will into complete subjection to God's; Redemption shows us in what manner that Grace was won for us by which alone we can attain to oneness of will with God.

Mother Juliana, of Norwich, contemplating the little hazel-nut in her hand which she conceived as representing the Universe, said as she beheld it: "He made it, He keeps it, He loves it."

He made it, this Universe, so vast and so magnificent, with its countless millions of suns and planets, exhaustless, as it seems, in the splendour of its fathomless grandeur. Think; the light from the nearest stars takes nigh two thousand years to reach this earth—and we know the speed at which light travels. Thus can we form some feeble conception of creation's immensity. And by one act of His will, God gave it all existence: "He spake the word and

they were made, He commanded and they were created."

The creative act of God, has its far off reflection in man. Every maker of things, is a creator of things; but man needs something to make things of, and something to make things with. The Sculptor wants to make a St. Sebastian; he must have ideas, stone, tools. The finished product will be the realisation in stone of the chosen ideal; the work will require time and labour. God wills to make, and it is made. The Sculptor does not know all the possible statues he might make; he knows some. God knows all the possible universes that might be made; out of them all, He chose to make this one. He had no material; by one Act of His Will, matter and form received existence at the same moment, and the Universe sprang into being.

This is an Act of infinite Power, the work of God alone. He made it.

Infinite power gave it being; it needs infinite power to keep in it being. If God's power sustaining all things was withdrawn for an instant, all creation would fall back into that nothingness from whence it came. God keeps it that it may not perish, He holds it in the hollow of His Hand and supports it by the Might of His Power.

And He loves it. The Universe which He created He loves, for it was made in Love. He beholds, in the work of His Hands and in all its manifold manifestations, the manifestation of Himself, the reflection of His Glory, and therefore He loves it.

This is true of the Universe in general, it is also true of everything in it, and in a special degree is it true of every spiritual nature within it, whether angelic or human: He loves it.

"He made it, He keeps it, He loves it"; God is our Maker, God is our Keeper, and—most amazing of all—God is our Lover.

This vast universe, whose greatness overwhelms us when on some starry night we look up and wonder at the depth of its seeming infinity, is ever telling forth the Glory of its Maker; "the Heavens declare the Glory of God," the whole creation is one hymn of Praise to His Majesty, His Goodness and His Power.

God is Light, Light uncreated, Light inaccessible, and created light is some faint reflection of His splendour. Light makes visible the object on which it falls, and also beautifies it: how the play of light falling on the most hideous work of man softens its harshness and bestows on it something of light's own loveliness.

See Ypres, that tragic city of Flanders, with the gaunt ruins of the old Cloth Hall yet erect and defiant in the shining of the setting sun; she is clothed in a strangely sorrowful beauty, like some Queen in her robe of mourning.

Light does that, the natural light of the sun. God's light, falling on the soul, not only reveals the ruin wrought by sin; it covers the soul with some of God's own beauty, and finally makes her a partaker in His Divine Nature.

God made the world and man. Man is from below and from above, his nature is partly spiritual and partly material, he has a body and a soul. God also made the Angels. Their nature is not material; they are pure spirits and God's first creation, as they are first also by their nature in likeness to Himself.

The spirit life of the angels consists in knowing and willing.

These great Intelligences have a capacity for knowing far surpassing ours. They embrace the whole created Universe in the reach of their knowledge. Our knowledge of things is derived from outward phenomena, and attained by the laboured process of induction, but the angels know the causes that stand beneath all external manifestations. This power of seeing behind the outward appearances to the causes producing them enables the angels to possess accurate knowledge of future events, when they can be known in their causes, and also enables them to use the powers of nature in a way impossible to us.

True, they do not know with absolute certainty those future events which depend for their realisation on the free acts of creatures. These, except He reveal them, are known only to God, but the Angels know everything else so perfectly that they can be almost sure of the turn of impending events. To give an example: Spirit Intelligences were able to know and communicate the coming of the great catastrophe, that has overshadowed the world so

completely*: this they were able to do through their knowledge of the causes already in operation and their ultimate tendency. These communications, extending over a number of years, became more pressing and insistent as to the certitude of what was coming as the time drew nigh for its fulfilment; they ceased about one year before the War.

The Angels' knowledge of God is intuitive: they behold God in the unveiled Glory of the face to face vision, not through the medium of any created thing. They see Him as He is, in His own Divine Nature and threefold Personality, since the Saviour Himself has declared of the Guardian Angels that "in Heaven they do always behold the Face of My Father."

Their Will also is of a strength commensurate with their stupendous knowledge.

To will with the angel is to do: the willing and the doing are simultaneous, and the power of their will is such that they can lay hold of the forces of nature at their pleasure and use them as they list.

With us to will means the setting in motion of a series of secondary causes; the Angels, with their superior knowledge and stronger will, produce the effects they desire at the same moment as their willing.

An Angel can pass with such swiftness from one end of the universe to another that it might seem as if his will was operating in two places at the same time, although an immensity of space divides the two.

As the supreme object of the Angelic Intelligence is the knowledge of God, so the supreme object of the Angelic Will is the Love of God. The love the Angels render to God is of a perfection impossible to man in this world, because of the manifold hindrances arising from the corporal side of his nature.

The Angel-Spirits both know and love God, with a perfect knowledge and a perfect love.

Since they partake of the Divine Nature, all their operations may be said to be Divine, because such is the per-

* I express no opinion as to whether the spirit communications were angelic or satanic, as I am only concerned with the fact as illustrative of angelic knowledge.

fection of unity between their will and God's that although there are two wills, the Angelic and the Divine, there is only one Divine operation; they are so possessed by the Divinity, that they never vary by so much as a hair's breadth from the Will of their Lord.

The intensity of their burning Love is such as passes all our capacity of even conceiving; it is a Love which is adequate to its object, because the very Love itself is produced by the Divine Fire burning within them; they live their life in the very Being of God.

Their essential work is the Praise of God's Glory, which they render Him by looking and loving. Looking, they are flooded with God's Infinite Goodness and Beauty received in their spirit-nature without any defect because there is nothing to resist the incoming of the Uncreated Light. In this Seeing their will becomes one Living Flame of Love, and this flame is ever burning with exhaustless energy; the Angelic Spirit is like a piece of wood cast in the midst of a furnace, that glows with the light of the fire in which it is cast, ultimately becoming fire itself; the Angel-Love in God is in such wise that it is God-Love too.

The Angels communicate with each other by spiritual impression, through which the whole conception of the one Angel is impressed intellectually on the other at once, in all its completeness; hence there is no possibility of misunderstanding arising as to the nature of the communication or around anything connected with it.

If we reflect on the difficulty we experience in conveying to another the particular conception we have in our mind by the laboured medium of speech or writing—and how often we find, even when we seem to have obviated every possibility of error, that we are entirely misunderstood—we shall the better realise the excellency of the Angelic mode of speaking.

"What a pity we cannot talk as the angels do!" said a dear little sister to me one day, who had more than once experienced the difficulties of speech as a means of conveying ideas and concepts.

Sometimes the spirit of some holy soul is elevated up to the height of spiritual communication at certain

moments in this life. St. Bridget of Sweden relates how the whole Rule of her Order was revealed to her spirit in one single flash, although, as she said, it took long after to write it down. Trying to describe her impression, she said it was as if a multitude of precious jewels were poured out before her at once, and the intellect was able at the same instant to grasp all the detailed beauty of each.

Towards the end of his life, St. Benedict in his cell at Monte Cassino beheld the whole world and all happenings in it gathered up into one single ray of light! Whether these two shewings were impressed upon the soul by angels, or directly by God, is immaterial; whichever it may have been they do help us a little to understand the speech of the Spirit-world.

The Angels come into communication with man either through (a) external or (b) imaginary vision, or by (c) direct spiritual impression on the soul.

In the first case, they assume some material body in order that their presence may become manifest to our natural sight, as a spirit cannot be seen by the senses. The formation of such a body offers no difficulty to the Angelic nature, with its extraordinary knowledge and will, by which it can exert all its immense strength to perform whatever it determines: Such appearances of angelic spirits are recorded in every age and every land. In these manifestations they use a material form to be seen by the eye and a voice that may be heard by the ear, as was the case with the Angel who led forth St. Peter out of prison and conversed with him.

The Angel employs the imaginary vision, when he uses the imagination as his medium of communication. The vision may be so vivid and the speech so distinct that the soul receiving the impression through the imagination cannot always distinguish between it and the external vision.

The third and most perfect communication is by means of Spirit impression made by the Angel-Spirit directly on the soul, whereby the whole matter is impressed at once with great power and lasting effect, exceeding anything wrought in the other two cases.

In the first two modes of communication it is often

extremely difficult to determine whether a particular manifestation is an external or imaginary vision, because the narrator gives his experience as he received it, with little regard to the mode of its coming. Sometimes even the third experience of spiritual impression may become confounded with either of the former, but owing to the more abiding character of this vision it can, as a rule, be readily recognized.

A certain soul, who had experience of these spiritual impressions, describing one in particular, said: "It appears more real to me than anything that I can see (with the natural eye)," and this impression of which she was speaking, remained in her soul vividly distinct for some months.

Such is the great world of Angel-Spirits, amazingly endowed with sanctifying Grace and gifted with inconceivable powers of knowledge and will; each angel, as St. Thomas says, a very world in himself, a world with which we are constantly in contact through the spirit life of the soul.

God's other spiritual creation is man. He formed man's body from the dust of the earth. We can scarcely think of that body without thinking of the sentence that fell upon it as the result of the fall: "Dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return." We find it difficult to realise the body's first estate and yet, unless we do, we shall only imperfectly understand man's composite nature. Man's body was formed not for death, but life, unending life, and so the body in the glory of its first existence was not subject to decay and corruption; it was immune from all the varied pains of disease and sickness, was not fatigued and wearied by labour, lost not the freshness of youth with the passing of days, but ever remained exulting in the full plenitude of its powers.

And the Living Spirit, the soul within, imparted vitality to the body in which she dwelt; for the soul is the life of the body, not the body the life of the soul. That soul was herself filled with all the fulness of God, the Divine Spirit of His indwelling united her in perfect love and conformity to His Will, so that she never varied from that Will for one instant in anything great or small.

Through this indwelling of the Spirit the soul enjoyed that gift of integrity whereby all her powers and passions were absolutely subject to reason; for example, the passion of anger was incapable of rising up in revolt and casting reason from her throne, as so often befalls in man's fallen state.

When anger blazes forth and casts reason aside, you behold one temporarily bereft of his senses; you do not attempt to reason with him, unless you are supremely foolish; you know it is as easy to reason with a lunatic as with an angry man; you get out of the way and wait till reason shall have once more resumed her sway.

What is true of Anger is true of all the other passions, as we only know too well by sorrowful experience. We are so accustomed to this ceaseless conflict within that we find it difficult to realise the state when every passion was humbly obedient to reason, when the five external senses only perceived that which the soul within willed them to perceive, and man's body, instead of being a burden to bear down the spirit, was in every member absolutely subject to the dictates of the soul; yet such was man when he came forth into existence at the first. His soul-life, like that of the angels, consists in knowing and willing, and both his knowledge and his will had a power not unlike that of the Angels, before the ruin of the fall.

"Man was made a little lower than the Angels," because his spirit was restrained within the narrow limits of the body, but he was made "a little lower" that the Lord might "crown him with glory and worship." Had he come triumphant through his probation, the body, without the pain of death, would have been glorified and lifted up to share in the gifts of the spirit-life, as it shall be yet, when the final triumph of the Lord shall come.

CHAPTER V

MAN'S PERDITION

We have not been long on this earth before we perceive that there are two contrary principles acting and re-acting upon the soul. One moment the evil power seems to have impressed himself so strongly upon her that she seems all but helpless and will-less beneath his control; at another moment the power of good seems to have triumphed and the soul is so filled with peace that she thinks she will never be moved. But the peace is broken, the darkness comes back, broken again by the light, and the conflict goes on with ever-varying fortune and intensity all the days of life, until death comes to end the conflict, save in the case of those few souls in whom one power or the other has gradually obtained such complete mastery that there is little or no variation in their state.

The soul looks for the explanation of this conflict, which she perceives in others no less than in herself. Why this strife? Why these astonishing and extraordinary contradictions in the same personality that, regarded from without, seem so utterly inexplicable and incomprehensible?

For the explanation, we have to go back to that beginning of evil, when the standard of revolt against God was set up by the rebel Angels in Heaven.

We have seen something of that Spirit-world, the splendour, the might, the knowledge of each one of the angel-host; power ranging up through vast hierarchies of light and attaining its culmination in Lucifer, the Light-bearer, the most magnificent creation of God in all that most magnificent world.

Of his superb grandeur, intelligence, and mighty power we can only form the feeblest conception, but we can in some measure gather what it was from what it is, even in his fallen state, from his influence on the children of men, from that first fatal moment long ago, down through all the ages until now.

There came a time in that great Spirit-world when all the inhabitants should be proved in their allegiance to their Lord and Life-giver. Then this magnificent Intelligence, beholding himself so superb in the splendour of his powers, uplifted the standard of revolt: "I will be like to the Most High, I will not serve." In that moment, when he beheld himself, pride filled his being, and he turned from the Vision of the Uncreated Light to the vision of himself. And one-third of the heavenly host, joining him, united beneath his banner; they were the first-born of all the children of pride.

Pride was the first sin of all, for "I will not serve" follows swiftly on the cry, "I will be like God"; pride manifests itself in rebellion.

St. John saw in wondrous vision that mighty conflict, when Michael and the Angels who kept their first estate joined battle with Satan and all his rebel host. Michael's battle-cry, "Who is like to God!" opposed the truth of humility to the lie of pride. "And there was war in heaven, Michael and his Angels fought, likewise the Devil and his Angels, and prevailed not, but were cast out, neither was their place found in heaven any more."

So war is no new thing. It goes back through all the ages of earth to that first far-off struggle, the unhappy precursor of every conflict since. That was no long drawn out strife, swift as the lightning fell Satan and his rebel army, from the splendour of Heaven to the outer darkness of Hell, in the fateful moment when the contemplation of self replaced the vision of God.

The supernatural life, in which they had rejoiced from the beginning of their creation, was for ever blotted out, so utterly destroyed that it was as though it had never been. They who had been Angels of Light became spirits of darkness, for whom was reserved the blackness of everlasting night. The sin of the Angels, committed with the full light and power, with all the deliberation of their Spirit-nature, was such that it was without repentance and without redemption.

Each of the Angels fell through his own deliberate choice, independent of and unaffected by the act of any other Angel; the pure-spirit nature of the Angels did not

proceed from a common stock, like humankind by the process of generation, but each Angel was the separate creation of God, a complete and independent world in himself.

Fallen though they are, their essential nature has not changed, so that the powers proper to them yet remain and are still exercised.

And there was a great void in those Spirit Hierarchies, after that stupendous conflict, but the Angels under Michael who had proved true to their trust were confirmed in Grace and henceforth were so oned with God that they were forever incapable of falling from Him.

To fill the ranks thinned by pride God created man, and He made him in a state below that of the Angels, the more effectually to humble the pride of those whose place he should fill.

Man's inferiority arises from the fact that the soul, a pure spirit, is limited in its action, restrained in a mere corporal body, a body proceeding by generation from parent to child. The soul because of its spirit-nature is a separate creation, like the Angels, infused by God into the body prepared for it.

But after man's probation that body was to be glorified in such wise as to partake of the life and powers of the spirit. Now, just as the Angels had the probation belonging to intellectual nature, so likewise had man.

When God formed man in His own likeness, and set him in that Paradise of pleasure wherein was found everything that could minister to the full and abundant satisfaction of man's corporal and spiritual life, God laid a command upon him: "Of every tree of Paradise thou mayest eat, but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat, for in the day thou eat of it thou shalt die the death."

There is the Divine Command, and a penalty is attached to it—the death penalty.

The supreme duty of the creature to the Creator is absolute submission, prompt and perfect obedience; this is the foundation, without which no order, natural or supernatural, can exist.

To every command there is attached the penalty that

must follow on disobedience to it. There was the duty of obedience out in France, and there was the penalty, in grave cases, death; hard, but necessary, for a command without the sanction of a penalty would be little worth.

Look at man, as he stands in the splendour of his unfallen state, look at his gifts and powers, at his surroundings; down to the most insignificant trifle, all is the free gift of God; surely man is bound to render to the Giver of all, the most generous and loving service that a creature may.

But into this Paradise of pleasure the Devil comes. He assumes the innocent form of the serpent, the easier to open his attack; he will not shew himself in all his unmasked malignity, although he has "come down having great wrath, knowing that he has but a short time." His first word is a direct challenge to God's Authority: "Why has God commanded that you should not eat of every tree." By what right, by what authority, does He impose this upon you?

Why? That is the interrogation running through the ages, from the first utterance in the garden until now. Why this restraint, why these commands? How loudly we hear that "Why?" to-day, when men seek to throw away all restraint, and cast aside all law, human and Divine.

And the woman begins to argue with the Devil and of course she is no match for him, for he is a clever reasoner, far more clever than the most brilliant theologian the world has ever seen. You know the old proverb: "He who would sup with the Devil must have a long spoon."

In her answers Eve goes beyond the command. God had said, "You shall not eat of it," while she adds, "nor touch it," but she hesitates about the penalty, "lest perhaps we die"; she exaggerates the one and minimises the other. The Devil is quick to take advantage: "No, you shall not die the death, for God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as Gods knowing good and evil." He presses the attack; he makes light of the peril: "You shall not die the death." Then he spreads before her all that will be gained: "Ye shall be as Gods."

Her eyes turn to the tree, "it is good to eat, beautiful

to the eyes, delightful to behold." The Devil is no fool: he never paints sin in all its horrible hideousness; no, he presents it under the appearance of good; as he tempted to that first sin, so he has tempted to every sin since.

Beautiful to the eyes, fascinating, alluring, captivating, sin is all that, and the soul is held fast in its toils. And good to eat, good because of the satisfaction it offers to the senses hungry with desire. Yes! That is how the Devil with a few master-strokes paints sin.

And as he painted it on that first disastrous day, so has he been busy painting it ever since.

There was a poor young child of seventeen, brought up in a convent school, not in the world a year before she was swept off her feet by sin in its most deadly and seductive form. She sinned with the manager of the office in which she was employed. I tried to get her away out of his power, but, alas! in vain. She was blinded and fascinated, and yet, poor soul, she said: "Father, I never knew what sin was till I left the convent." And I believe her.

Only a few months and she falls into the hands of this wretch who blasts her life: "Ah, Father, it seems to be all right when I am with him."

How well the Devil sees to that; he takes care that the soul is blinded, once he has got her into his net; that is one of the extraordinary things about sin,—it not only fascinates, but it blinds, so that good becomes evil, and evil good.

It is amazing how great is the attraction, for that which is forbidden: it is enough to say to a child, "You must not go there," for him to turn that way. Give him a garden to play in, as large as you like, and forbid one little corner, and see how he will gravitate to the spot. There must be something wonderfully good in that little corner, and his imagination pictures it as possessing more delights than all the rest of the garden, however large it be.

But to return: the longer Eve looks at the tree the more delightful it appears, the more excellent the fruit; surely the thing that looks so pleasant to the eye cannot bear within it the seed of death?

And the Devil watches her glance, he sees to it that

nothing shall be wanting in the seductive sweetness of the vision he sets before her, and his work is well-nigh done, since he has turned her eyes from God and set them on that which perishes.

At last the delight of that sight overcomes her hesitation : she stretches forth her hands like so many since have done, and takes the fruit and gives to her husband, and they both eat of it.

But while it is yet in their mouths they perceive that what seemed so fair has the sting of death within it. The supernatural life within them is shrivelled up and destroyed, leaving not even a trace behind ; they fall to the level of the purely natural life, the vision of God is only a vanished dream ; they see the Devil's promise verified in part at least, for they know the meaning of good and evil.

The destruction of that supernatural soul-life brings in its train the death of the body. The body must share in the guilt of the soul, its agelessness is gone, so is immunity from sickness, pain and weariness.

"By one man sin entered the world, and death by sin, so that death has passed upon us all, since all have sinned in him."

Death, then, is the penal consequence of sin : it is only through sin that death finds admittance to the world. Had there been no sin there would have been no death.

The double death of soul and body fell not merely on those two first parent-sinners of our race, but likewise upon all their descendants, because the human race was so oned with Adam that all sinned in him, and hence all human-kind must share in his guilt.

That act of sin induced the state of sin, the act was transient, the result permanent ; and, because permanent, the Apostle could say, "so death passed upon all." Every single soul enters this world in a state of spiritual death because she enters it deprived of her supernatural life.

Perhaps sometimes you have watched the ever-widening circles produced on the waters of a pond, when a stone has been cast into it, and marked how the ripples have only been arrested by the shore. The first sin is the stone, and time is the pond. The circles still ripple across the ages

and they shall not be stayed until that last morning when the Angel, standing with one foot on land and one on sea, shall declare that time shall be no more.

What is true of the first sin is true, in a lesser degree, of every actual sin. Every sin makes its circles on time's pond, and ripple succeeds ripple long after the sinner has passed to his reward.

There is a great gulf fixed between the soul and the body. The body is mortal, but the soul is immortal, and the immediate creation of God, infused into the body duly prepared for it.

Being the immediate creation of God, the soul is necessarily good, and only comes under the domination of sin in consequence of its union with a body conceived in sin. So far as the soul is concerned, original sin consists in the *privation of sanctifying grace alone and in nothing else;* it is nothing actual, but something is not there which should be there, and would have been there—that is all.

The soul, thus deprived of sanctifying Grace, is incapable of attaining her supernatural end, which necessarily requires supernatural means.

The essential evil of sin is not in the death of the body, but in the destruction of the supernatural life of the soul. Terrible as the death of the body may appear, it is nothing when compared to the soul's death.

As a result of this want of sanctifying Grace the soul's vision is clouded and her will weakened to such an extent that, without supernatural aid, she is incapable of any supernaturally good act, that is of any act meriting a supernatural reward. She is utterly incapable of taking even a single step towards the attainment of her end. That does not mean, for a moment, that she is incapable of acts of natural goodness. Human nature, unaided by Grace, can produce acts that are naturally good. On the battle-front, during the war, men rose to the most sublime and inconceivable heights of natural goodness, and, thank God, of supernatural goodness too. There is a clear distinction between the works of nature and of Grace: the motive power of one is natural, of the other, supernatural, the Holy Ghost operating in the soul both to will and to do.

But look at the state of man as the result of the fall: Sin is triumphant and the whole race subject to its power, incapable of rising by any effort of its own to that supernatural life lost by the single act of original sin. The most austere penances, the most inconceivable mortifications are alike in vain: unless aided from without, man can never arise from the misery into which he has fallen. A great king beholds a poor beggar by the roadside and his heart is stirred by love and compassion; and he takes him into his royal court, bestows on him princely rank and a heritage befitting his state, on condition that he renders loyal and faithful service. The man is seduced by the king's enemy, and forgetful of all his obligations and of the king's loving generosity, he goes over to the enemy, and joins in the campaign against his sovereign. As a consequence of his rebellion he is deprived of his princely rank and heritage, and outlawed from the country. This man's children will suffer, but not unjustly. They will not be deprived of anything that is theirs by right; they will be deprived of something which would have been theirs, as the result of a free gift. The father's rank and position is gone, they cannot inherit it. Should the children, when of age, join their father in open warfare against the king, then their enmity is no longer "original" but actual.

Adam was that beggar, and God the King.

The princely rank was the supernatural life, by which Adam was brought to share in the glory of the Royal Court and in the vision of God. The man's heritage was the preternatural life, the gift of integrity and immortality corresponding with the dignity to which the supernatural life had upraised him.

The Devil is the King's enemy, who seduced the man from his allegiance by the glittering delights he set before him.

Every actual sin committed by the children of Adam is a *personal* act of warfare against the King, meriting, therefore, its own special punishment.

CHAPTER VI

CHRIST'S REDEMPTION

There are events so shatteringly stupendous in their immensity that it is only gradually that the mind begins even to guess at their tremendous significance.

The fall of man is one of these events, so incomparably vast in the reach of its overshadowing, that the human mind reels in the presence of a happening so inconceivably beyond its power of comprehension.

On that fateful day, when the darkness descended on humankind, the promise of light was given: "the seed of the woman shall crush the serpent's head."

How can the great gulf fixed between man and his Maker be bridged over? A mediator must stand in the gap and make of both one. And when these two who are to be oned are God, infinite, uncreate, and the creature, the work of His hand, how shall one be found, who, partaking of the nature of God and man, shall by his one mediatorial act restore the unity destroyed by sin?

Who shall offer to the Divine Majesty a satisfaction sufficing to atone for the sin that seems so beyond all satisfaction?

A Mediator is forthcoming Whose Personality is Divine, and Who unites in that personality both God and man. The Eternal Son of the Everlasting Father, casting the Eyes of His limitless compassion on the ruined children of men, determines their restoration in His Own Person, through the assumption by Himself of their nature.

In the "fulness of time"—God's time, not man's—the moment for Redemption came; the wonder-story began its unfolding in time, although foreknown from all eternity.

The Angel Gabriel comes to that young girl of the lineage of David and declares to her the amazingly sublime mission for which she is destined: "the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High overshadow thee."

The young girl has been marvellously formed and

fashioned for the work she has to do. Through the merits of the "Lamb slain before the foundation of the world" Whom she is to bear in her womb, she is exempt from the dark image of sin that disfigures all the world. Grace works in such matchless sort in her soul, that every beating of her heart gives a fresh glory to her Lord, and yet, resplendent with Grace as she is, she is a creature with her own free will. She can pronounce her yea or nay to the Angel who stands before her.

What miracle of power is this, that God puts into the hands of a child of sixteen: the right to accept or refuse the salvation of our race?

And she neither falters nor fails in her God-given mission. *Fiat.* "Be it done to me according to Thy word," and as those words escape her lips "the Word was made flesh." She carries within her womb Him Who rules the starry heights, and holds all things that are, in the hollow of His Hand.

The preparation for this day had been long. God had chosen one special nation, led them, taught them, dwelt in the midst of them, just for this.

We realise how strangely different are God's ways from ours as we look at this nation, chosen to be the means through which Redemption should come into the world. How slow and hard of heart to understand His teaching; how manifold their rebellions and back-slidings; how earthy and dull of hearing to those He sent to them; but they were God's chosen, the choice of Him Who knew all things. And how altogether surprising, how utterly unforeseen, is the way of His coming. A poor girl and a poor man make their way through the streets of Bethlehem, they seek a shelter from the winter's cold. There is no room; no room in the palace; no room in the houses; no room even in the inn.

But at last a shelter is found, poor and wretched: it is the roughly-fashioned stable, rock-hewn, as you may see in any Eastern town to-day. The beasts are the only companions of these two poor wanderers; and there, in that cattle-shed, is born He who has come into this world for its ransoming.

Such is the home which this world prepares for its

Saviour; and such is the place of His choice, since all things obey His will.

Look at His Royal Throne, the manger with its trappings of straw.

This poor little helpless Child is the great God of all, upholding all things by the Word of His power; ruling the planets and the suns as they speed through space, yet poor and suffering on the straw of that most strange throne. Ah, Bethlehem, hidden beneath the shroud of Humanity lies Divinity in thy lowly cattle-shed!

A few poor shepherds are up there on the hillside minding their sheep. They alone out of all Israel receive word of the Redeemer's coming. Shepherds are the first adorers of the Good Shepherd.

Suddenly they perceive a wondrous light; they look up, their amazed eyes behold the shining forms of Angels, and they hear the words: "Fear not, for I bring you tidings of great joy, for unto you this day in Bethlehem is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord."

The men are so simple that they are not surprised at the vision and the message: theirs is faith which sees the invisible and is not confounded at the seeing. The heavens are filled with all the hosts of light, and the notes of the first "*Gloria in Excelsis*" break the silence of that most silent night. Then all the light vanishes, the songs are stilled; everything looks just as it did before.

But the shepherds do not think it all an illusion, or that they have been dreaming: they do not seek for some means of explaining away their astonishing experience. No, without any hesitation they say: "Let us go even unto Bethlehem and see this great sight which the Lord has showed to us."

It is to the very simple that God reveals His Truth. The clever, or at least those who think themselves so, expect God to accommodate His working to their own little preconceived ideas: they are all put out when He upsets all their calculations as to how He should act. They are quite sure of themselves and ready with an explanation of everything in Heaven and Earth.

The Shepherds of Bethlehem were not clever; the miracle offered no difficulty to them; they were not con-

founded because an Angel had spoken to them; they took it all as a matter of course, and so they went their eager way, sure they would find in Bethlehem what the Angel had foretold.

And what an anti-climax awaits them in that cattle-shed. An Infant, lying weak and helpless on the straw, and close beside, a poor young girl, His Mother, watching over Him, and a poor man. Is this "the great sight" they have come down the mountain-side to see? Have they not made a mistake? Surely this poverty-stricken little group is not the Court of the great King?

They have no hesitation; it is still "a great sight" to them, because they beheld it with the great sight of Faith. They paid their simple, fervent adoration there, in that place, so lowly, yet so high and lofty, since the great God of all had vouchsafed to choose it for His Dwelling.

Other adorers are approaching, led by the shining of a star. Three wise men, instructed by ancient lore that a star's appearing would be the sign of the coming of Redemption, had watched the face of the sky wistfully, hoping to see the day foretold. And they watched, and saw.

With unfailing courage they set out on their way to follow the leading of the star. There were wise counsellors, then as now, ready with a hundred reasons against their journey. The desert, infested with robbers, the uncertainty of following this strange light in the Heavens that might lead them they knew not where, to they knew not what.

The wise men brushed all such reasoning aside, and, pressing on their way, came at length to Jerusalem, the city of the Great King.

Here they are confident they will find the object of their quest. Surely the whole city will be astir to welcome the King, Whose sign in the Heavens had led them thus far on their way.

But Jerusalem, although it holds the temple of the Lord of all, although it is the place where He has set His Name, is a great disappointment to the Magi. It is not making ready for the King, it is all unconscious of His coming, and

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only distressed and troubled on hearing the tidings. Herod fears for his throne; the Priests fear for the Temple; and in fact, the whole city is moved, not with joy, but with consternation at so inconvenient a coming.

The Council is called, and doctors of theology show that it is at Bethlehem, not Jerusalem, that the Saviour is to be born.

The wise men, despite their disappointment and surprise at the unlooked-for distress their news caused, with unresting haste go on their way once more. Passing outside the city gate into the open country-side they behold once more the shining of that star whose light had been hidden in the glare and stir of the town. And their hearts are quickened and stirred with wonderful joy as they see the familiar light again, leading them until it stands over the place where the Young Child was: And what a place! How unlike the splendid palace of Herod is this poor little wayside shed. But their faith does not falter, they do not hesitate, straightway they enter in.

With adoring faith piercing the outward shewing of humanity, they behold their God, and falling in ardent adoration at the feet of this poor little Child, they offer their costly gifts: Gold, because He is King of Kings; Incense, because He is Light of Light; Myrrh, because He is Victim of Victims.

The supremely wise and the supremely simple alike find their way to the Saviour's feet. The supremely simple, knowing their own nothingness, find the way of Faith through their own utter poverty.

The supremely wise have the wisdom to know their own poverty, so they find the way of Faith through the knowledge of their own nothingness.

Those who never find their way to Bethlehem are the half-wise, who know enough to think they know everything, whereas they really know nothing as they ought to know it: let them become fools that they may become truly wise.

As we look at the utter poverty which was His from the first moment of His entry into the world until the last, we realise that the way of renunciation is the only way back to God. By suffering the desire for material

things to fill his vision man lost the Divine Vision. When the Saviour comes to renew man's first estate, He begins the work of reparation, by the utter rejection of all those created things which His Own Hands had made; He came possessing nothing, that we might possess all things. He takes the form of a slave to more completely annihilate Himself, that poor blinded humanity might be won back from its foolish pride through the example of His humility.

But He is not long in the world before He must fly to Egypt to escape the hate of His own chosen people. What an inexplicable embracing of human weakness is here manifested by Him, through Whose Power all things are held in being.

And He returns, and thirty years of His life are spent hidden away in that insignificant little village of Nazareth. How useless it all seems to the restless eyes of the unsatisfied and unsatisfying activity of our day. What a very commonplace round it was, just a little carpentering of the most ordinary sort. To what purpose was this waste? Yet He was working for the salvation of the world just as much in that secret hidden-away life, as in those crowded days of His short public ministry, or the fiery anguish of the Cross.

The world thinks that if a thing cannot be seen it is nothing. It is scornfully impatient of the cloistered life of prayer and penance. Whatever do they shut themselves up for: why not go out and do a little good? The world's idea of good is what can be seen, and tabulated; all else is a mere waste of time. Sometimes I even hear Catholics say: "Fancy a lot of people wasting all their time in praying!" So they look at Contemplative Orders and echo that old proverb: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Yes, *the One Good Thing* did come out of Nazareth—Redemption came forth of her.

And Redemption is coming forth again and again, out of those enclosed gardens of prayer, where Grace works in superabundant measure and reaches forth over the whole earth. There is not a place in the wide world that can be barred against it; it is a force that penetrates the most hardened heart and does the most impossible things. Your personal efforts are restricted, but prayer is like the

spirit, unrestricted in its movements, unrestrained in its power.

But these thirty years come to their close, thirty wasted years as the world counts them, and the public ministry begins. It begins strangely, out of due time, as our Lord says; the first manifestation of His power was wrought, although His time had not yet come, at the prayer of His Mother. The occasion is a wedding. In the midst of the joyful feast the wine fails, and the watchful eyes of the Mother perceive the need, her heart beats with pitiful sympathy for the distressed host, and she speaks the word to her Son: "They have no wine." She asks nothing, because she knows His heart as none other can ever know it; she is strong in the confidence that she has only to tell Him the need for Him to supply it. His answer seemed almost a refusal, although she did not take it so, for immediately she says to the servants: "Whatsoever He saith to you, do it." She read in the Divine eyes the answer to her quest. And she is not disappointed. He works the miracle she had sought, and inanimate nature is submissive to His command.

Thenceforward He goes and gathers His disciples about Him. Looking at them the world would say: "Well, He is no judge of character." The disciples were very self-centered, astonishingly selfish, strangely ambitious, striving even amongst themselves as to what place should be assigned them in His Kingdom; they loved Him, it is true, but in a very strange and earthly way.

He calls Judas: He knows all about him, knows his weakness, his love of money, and yet gives him the charge of it. He calls them friends, not servants; He takes them into the most extraordinarily intimate relationship with Himself, for three years showers His loving care and affection upon them.

He knew all their weaknesses and their selfishness; He knew exactly how they would behave, knew that one would sell Him for a few miserable pieces of silver, that another would deny, with curses, that He knew Him, that all would leave Him in His supreme need; despite all this, He loved them, and gave no sign of what He knew, even to the traitor.

How amazed we are, when we see the instruments He chooses for His work. He is always amazing all through the ages, He is amazing still. We cannot make it out, when we see the people He calls, still less can we make it out when we see those He does not call: we think we should make such a different choice to His—and so we should—but then, "He knows what is in man"—and we do not.

When He chooses the Head of His Church, His choice falls not on St. John, who was nighest to His Heart, but on St. Peter; and again we wonder why.

St. Peter, ardent, impetuous and fearful, one in whom courage and cowardice seem strangely blended—it is he who receives the power of the keys.

He had His Divine purpose in all this. He knows what a strange mixture we are, how strength and weakness are ever joined in fellowship within us. For this very reason He chose St. Peter. St. John would have seemed so altogether beyond us; but somehow St. Peter, with his very human weakness, with his sudden fears, and equally sudden courage, with his tears and his penitence, appeals to us, because he is so very much like our own poor selves.

And he did become strong, when the Divine Spirit had free course within him; here again there is hope and encouragement for our own faltering selves, by the same Spirit by Whom he became strong we may become strong.

The Lord goes through the towns and villages manifesting His power over nature animate and inanimate. The very winds and the sea obey Him. The sick return to health; the lame walk; the deaf hear; the blind see; the dead return to life at His command. How crowded with works of Divine pity and power were those three years. The works were wonderful and the results were wonderful.

While the poor heard Him gladly, the more He showed forth His loving pity and mighty power, the steadier grew the hatred of the good and pious people towards Him. The Pharisees were the devout of their day, zealous for the law, upholders of the supernatural; we should have expected to find in them his most ready and ardent supporters. Not at all: they nursed an unrelenting and ever-

increasing hostility towards Him. They hated, as only good people know how to hate. Strange as it may seem, when good people begin to hate, they do it with a thoroughness that leaves the children of this world far behind.

Every fresh shewing of Christ's goodness and power added fresh fuel to the furnace of hate that was glowing in their hearts; at last they determine to take away His life. It was the manifestation of His power over death that hardened them to determine that nothing less than His death should satisfy them.

Thus the Saviour comes to the eventide of His earthly life, to the consummation of His Divine mission: "without shedding of blood there is no remission." "We are not redeemed by corruptible things as silver and gold but by the Precious Blood of Christ." It is only when the scarlet flood flows forth in full tide from the Cross that Redemption long-expected, is accomplished. The sacrifices of the old law are the sign-posts to Calvary, and their blood sprinklings picked out the trail leading to the sacrifice of the Cross.

The Paschal Feast draws nigh, and loving His own, He loved to the end. He sends on before Him those who were to make ready the last Passover. . . .

Evening draws on, He sits down and the twelve with Him; first He fulfils the Paschal rite, that is for ever to pass away, and afterwards initiates the Sacrifice; with His Own Hands He gives Himself, the last and greatest love-gift to His Own. A little later and they go forth into the garden, a strange foreboding upon them all.

He leaves all save Peter, James and John; with them He enters a little farther into the garden: "Watch here, while I go yonder and pray," He says; He only goes a stone's cast in front of them, and begins to enter upon His Agony.

How remarkable, despite all their protestations of so short a while before, they cannot keep their eyes open. Fear unformed, clothed them with drowsiness; sorrow and dread overwhelmed them; their eyes were heavy, heavy with foreboding and the dread of the coming day.

And there He kneels; crushed beneath the weight of Sin He falls to the ground. The horror of the Great Expiation

has fastened upon His Soul with all its piercing and fearsome malignity; Sin clothes Him, as it were, with a garment. He cries from the black night of His agony: "Father, if it be possible let this chalice pass from Me, but not My will, but Thine be done."

All the Sin of all time, from that first sin in the Garden until the last that man shall commit before the day of doom, appears before Him, each sin separate and distinct, with a vividness harder and clearer than that of a photograph, in all its unmasked malignity and unutterable vileness and loathsome repulsiveness: very different from the Devil's painted picture of seductive beauty whereby he has fooled his dupes from the beginning until now to soften its cruel outline. He was sinless, and He saw sin come so near to Him that He seemed Himself to be Sin. "The deep waters have come in even unto my soul, I stick fast in the deep mire where no ground is, all thy waves have gone over me."

Great drops of blood force their way through every pore and He falls three times to earth, bathed in that sweat. Man's sin was wrought in a garden, so was his restoration.

Three times He comes to the watchers, only to find them sleeping. "Peter, sleepest thou?" Yes: it is he who but a little before had so confidently declared he would go to prison and death with His Lord, who now fails even to watch through these few moments of awful vigil in the Garden.

The third time all is over: "Sleep on now, and take your rest." While He is yet speaking, the gloom of the Garden is lit up with the flare of torches; led by the miserable traitor, the soldiers, with their attendant rabble, burst in upon the little band.

For a moment there is a feeble show of resistance, then all forsake Him and flee, and He is left alone in the hands of His enemies. Those who but a short time before had promised so much, perform so little; it is often so.

Through the long hours of that awful night He is dragged from Judge to Judge, beaten, tortured, tormented, spat upon; all the venomous hate, long pent up, is poured out upon Him without stint. In the early hours of the morning He is fastened to the Pillar and the cruel thongs of

the Roman soldiery tear their way mercilessly through the quivering flesh, like the harrow of a plough crossing a field : "The ploughers ploughed upon my back and made deep furrows," "from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet there is no whole part in Me." When the laceration of that cruel scourging was at last ended, the Sacred Body was one great red wound.

Then the thorns are crushed down upon His Head in cruel mockery, piercing through to the bone ; the purple robe is cast about Him, and Pilate brings the poor tortured Figure forward to the gaze of the multitude.

"Behold your King!" Maddened with the blind fury of their hate, they rend the air with their cries : "Away with Him. We will not have this Man to reign over us. We have no king but Cæsar." Pilate strives to reason, but all the cruel, savage fanaticism of the Eastern mob is raised and can only be satiated with blood. They are beside themselves, maddened to such fury of passionate hatred that they cry : "His blood be on us and on our children. Away with Him, crucify, crucify!"

Like wild beasts frenzied at the sight of blood, the scarlet trickle from that thorn-crowned Head intensifies their savage cruelty a thousandfold. "Crucify, crucify!" fills the air with its ceaselessly monotonous rhythmic tempest of sound. Pilate is cowed as he beholds the blood lust in their eyes ; their voices and the voices of the Chief Priests prevail and Jesus is delivered to their will.

How fickle a thing is human nature ; how fickle the emotions of a crowd. Those who shriek, on fire with blood-lust, are the self-same multitude that acclaimed Him with such exultation but a few days before. Then it was "Hosanna ! blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord!" Now it is "Crucify, Crucify!" What a contrast between Palm Sunday and Good Friday !

And what a choice ; "Not this Man but Barrabas." Now Barrabas was a robber.

Jesus is led forth along the way to Calvary. What a lesson those two processions have to teach. On Palm Sunday He came in with waving of palm branches and children singing. On Good Friday He goes out with a fierce blasphemous mob raining blows and curses and every

kind of horrid insult that satanic malignity can suggest on His poor tortured figure. It is the same Person, it is the same crowd. Rising and falling, marking His passage in the Scarlet of His Blood, at length He arrives at the Hill of Calvary.

The Cross is prepared and He is laid upon it. The nails crush their cruel way through flesh and sinew: He is fastened to the wood and lifted up on the gibbet, whence life shall flow to all flesh.

As the Rood with its living burden, shaken with awful torture, is let down into the socket, He cries "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Shivering as the Poor Body is in every nerve and sinew with unutterable torment, exhausted by the stream of blood flowing in such abundant measure, His only cry is one of pity and pardon.

"Forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Of course they know not what they do, or they would never have done it: their eyes are blinded by the Devil so that they cannot see, their passions raised to a blazing frenzy of insensate hate: indeed they know not what they do, for did they know, their savage fury would be stilled to silence.

And our sin drives the nails in hands and feet, presses down the thorns on His Sacred Head, and crucifies the Lord a second time.

As it was then, so has it been ever since: the eyes of the sinner are blinded by the glittering fascination that the Devil casts around sin; and all the while they are sinning He is pleading "they know not what they do." What a tremendous example has He left us, shewing how we are to act when others afflict and injure us.

With a great struggle perhaps we forgive them. Let us remember our Saviour's words: "They know not what they do." And when we are sore stricken, and bitter thoughts struggle to rise in our heart, and bitter words strive for utterance, call to mind Jesus's loving forgiveness of His murderers, when they were making Him fast with savage malignity to the wood; then we shall stifle our thoughts, and words will die unuttered on our lips, and something of the Divine forgiveness will be reflected in our soul.

How strangely men forgot the Divine lesson during the fury of war. Good devout people at home gave forth sentiments that were no reflection of Calvary, while men on the battle front did not find it hard to forgive: rarely, if ever, you heard a word of bitterness there.

He has given most things: He has given His Love, He has given Himself, He is giving His Life; He has one gift yet ungiven, His Mother. And He chooses this moment of torment in which to give away the only consolation He has yet remaining.

Love is always giving, always looking to see what else it has to give.

That Mother stands beneath the Cross on Calvary, watching the dying of her Son, just as she had stood beside Him in the cattle shed. Her soul is wrung out with the unutterable agony of His Passion and His wounds; His racking torments, and inexpressible pain are reproduced in her soul in all their fearful intensity. Every pang that pierces His Heart pierces hers; she stands there, the Martyr-Mother, sword-pierced, one with Him in His Passion. She would not take back one pang or one stroke, although each wounds her as it wounds Him. The first *Fiat* of long ago, when as a young girl she made the great response, is hers still. She has no will save His.

"Behold thy Mother." The Eyes of Infinite love and tenderness are fastened first on the Mother and then on the Disciple. She is all He has to give, and now He gives her to His Own, to be their Mother too. He would share all He has with us, and so He will share that Mother's love with us and give her with His parting breath as His Love Gift to the Church His Bride.

The darkness overspreads the whole earth; the sun hides his face, and the mighty overshadowing is a darkness that may be felt. The cruel, cursing mob surging around the Cross is awed to silence in that preternatural darkness, and a chilling fear begins to strike the heart of this savage Eastern throng.

Out of that darkness comes a piercing cry; "My God, My God: Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" The outer darkness is the shadow of the inner darkness, which hid the Face of God from the Soul of the Sin-bearer.

He is left to tread "the winepress of the wrath of God" alone. He is shut out from the sight of His Father, surrounded, penetrated by the blackness of sin, now so close to His Soul, that it seems part of Himself. To the anguish of that tortured body, parched and blazing with fever, racked in every joint and bone and sinew with pain unutterable, clothed from head to foot in the Red Robe of His Blood, is added the far more awful torment of His Soul. Soul and body were upheld by the Divinity in their double pain, or death would have come long ago, but there was no sense of that support in the Soul, which only felt the bitter darkness of total abandonment.

Until we reach eternity we shall never understand the meaning of that exceeding bitter cry.

His Body was endowed with a sensitiveness to pain exceeding that of any other, there was a responsiveness to the least touch, beyond all that we can conceive—it was a body made ready for the sacrifice: "A body Thou hast prepared me"; and also a soul, so exquisitely balanced, so wonderful in all perfection, that sin produced in her refinements of horror past imagining: "He who knew no sin was made to sin for us."

God sometimes calls souls to share something of that darkness, to become partakers in the Abandonment of Calvary. "Can you drink of the chalice that I shall drink of?" Thus He speaks to the soul whom He has chosen for such special conformity to His Passion.

There are awful contrasts of light and dark in the spiritual life, and, of all experiences, that desolating darkness, that awful sense of utter forsakenness in the midst of the night of horror, is one of the most glorious and the most terrible that the soul is called upon to undergo. She stands alone, forsaken alike by Heaven and Earth. In that amazingly dreadful moment of the Passion, when the Saviour drained the chalice of His Dereliction to the very dregs, His Soul, although unknowing, was all the while upheld by His Divinity; so God is supporting the soul through the hours of her dereliction, although she perceives nothing of this, thinking herself to be abandoned for ever by Him. God conceals His support that the sacrifice may be complete, just as He did on Calvary.

The sacrifice hastens to its consummation : a little while and with a loud cry He commends His Soul to His Father, and the Body is left in the rigidity of death. The work of Redemption is accomplished. Every drop of His Blood has been shed, and He has blotted out in that Blood the handwriting that was against us, nailing it to His Cross.

Calvary looks the most utter failure that poor human eyes have ever beheld. Only a few brave women and St. John have stood there to see the end. Christ's enemies seem to have triumphed : they have had the blood for which they thirsted and cried with such unrelenting eagerness.

Really it was the most gloriously magnificent triumph. By that great all-sufficing sacrifice the Devil's kingdom is shattered, his power broken, sin and death flung down to Hell and a royal way opened right up to the throne of God in the Scarlet of the Saviour's Blood.

That Redemption is so superabundant that it would suffice for the redeeming of a million worlds like this, if such there be to redeem.

"Blood whereof one drop for humankind outpour'd,
Might from all transgression have the world restored."

The black day of man's foul sin is blotted out in the splendid shining of this day's Redemption.

The Sacrifice of Calvary and the Sacrifice of the Mass are one self-same sacrifice, and wherever the Mass is offered the One All Sufficient Sacrifice is offered for the sins of the whole world.

There is only the great *Now* in Eternity, and Calvary is the everlasting now, *it is*.

When this Great Sacrifice is uplifted, we touch reality ; just for that brief moment, time and space and distance vanish into nothingness in the presence of the Great Salvation. When the brazen serpent, the figure of Redemption, was lifted up in the desert, it was those who looked that lived. Dying eyes beheld that figure and beholding found life in the sight. Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and for ever. Looking at Him, beholding His tremendous sacrifice, we live. Life comes into the soul through that look. It is by looking, not by reasoning, that we find life in His Name.

He is our Life, our Redemption, everything. We look up at that Figure, scarlet-robed in His Blood on the Rood, and draw our life from Him. Blood is the life, and it is by His blood that we live. Blood is our natural life, Blood is our supernatural life. By that all-atoning tide our soul is cleansed from the foul image of sin and restored to His own Divine likeness. How He has loved me: He gave Himself for me, He drained the last drop of His Blood for me, He suffered in my stead and endured all the wrath of God in His Own Body on the tree, and by death destroyed death.

His love simply overwhelms me in the depth of its inexhaustible tenderness. Every blow that should have fallen on me has fallen on Him. How can I repay love such as this? How can I give anything less than all? How contemptibly insignificant and miserably paltry are all the vain things that have charmed this poor foolish heart of mine, when I view them in the Light of His amazing, measureless love for such a wretch as I. What can I do but fling them from me with loathing, hating myself for having even for a moment, weighed them against the Immensity of His Infinite Love?

One day, through His merits, I trust to enter that city which has God and the Lamb for the Light of it and to take my place with the Blood-washed throng, to sing for ever the praise of the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Then I shall love Him as I ought.

CHAPTER VII

THE BRIDE

From the tree of the Garden came death, from the tree of the Cross came life. The Son of God, raised upon the Cross, balanced the greatness of His Love against the guilt of the world, Love outweighing a million times all the load of sin.

That scarlet flood flowing from the Hill of Calvary brings Life and Redemption to all who are washed in its tide, and the Church is the river-bed.

All the graces of the Holy Ghost, all the fulness of Christ's salvation, comes to us through the Church. And thus the Church is something more than an organisation, it is an organism ; a living body, with a living spirit within her.

The Holy Ghost is the life of this organism, as the soul is the life of the body. All the external manifestation of the Church's life has its origin from the Living Spirit within. She is Spirit-led, Spirit-taught, Spirit-quickened by this mighty Indweller, Who holds the more than 300,000,000 souls of which she is composed, in unity, just as the spirit within us holds our body in unity.

As our body is composed of a multitude of cells, so is the body of the Church composed of a multitude of souls ; each soul partaking of the life of her body, as each cell partakes of the life of our body. If a cell ceases to partake of the body's life, it ceases to live, and if a soul ceases to partake of the life of the Mystical Body, she ceases to live.

This Church is one, in the sense that she is the only one, and beside her there is no other. In her alone does the Holy Spirit dwell as in His Home, operating and working through every part. She is one, unique, solitary ; there is none other like to her. She is one body because there is one spirit.

She is one, because Christ is one : there is as little possibility of the existence of two Churches as of two Gods

or two Redeemers. There are external evidences by which we may know her. He has set His seal upon her,—fourfold, like the four limbs of His Cross, that all may see and know her for His Own, and through them perceive the presence of the Life-giving Spirit within her.

She is one in the possession of a visible unity that can be apprehended by the external senses, one also in that her life through all the ages shews her always as identical with that first creation, when from the open Side of the Saviour on Calvary there flowed forth blood and water, and that Blood is her life as it is the life of every soul within her. Just as from the side of Adam was formed Eve, so from the side of the Saviour was fashioned the Church, His Bride. And as by the breathing-in of the spirit into Eve's body she became a living soul, so likewise on the first Pentecostal morn the Holy Ghost took possession of her body, and the Church began her life.

The Church's Unity is organic. A bundle of sticks tied together by a string has unity of a sort; a number of things frozen together are united for the moment: but the string is cut and the sun melts the ice, then the unity no longer exists. But the unity of the Church is that of a living organism, essential and not accidental. The Saviour prayed that her unity might be such as existed between Himself and the Father, and that was the possession of one self-same nature: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for all those who through their word shall believe in Me, that they may all be one, as We are One, that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me."

Now we see that this unity is something that can be externally manifested, because the world is to be convinced through the evidence of this fact, and as the world has no capacity to discern spiritual things it is incapable of apprehending a spiritual unity unless the fact of that spiritual unity is externally manifested. "I will give you the Spirit of Truth, Who shall guide you into all truth, Whom the world cannot receive because it neither perceiveth nor knoweth Him." The presence of the Spirit is only known without by external manifestation from within, in the same way as the spirit in our body evidences its presence by external sign without.

This mighty organism, with its more than three hundred million souls, gathered out of every people, nation, kindred and tongue under Heaven, "in the world yet not of it," overflowing the boundaries of every nation and exceeding the barriers of every state, manifests a unity that is unlike anything else of which we have cognizance. Go where you will, to cities of the most unpronounceable names, to lands speaking the most inconceivable tongues, and there you will find this marvellous organism at work; she is the living realization of the truth that "God has made of one blood all they that dwell on the earth" for she excludes none and embraces all. With her there is "neither Jew nor Greek, bond or free": wherever a living soul is to be found, that soul is to be incorporated into her life, helped with all the power of the Divine Spirit, and prepared for the final glory of perfect union with the Divinity in Heaven. Her business is to people Heaven with ransomed souls, to make nigh through the Blood of Christ all those who are afar off, and give them fellowship with the Saints on earth and in Heaven.

Her Faith is the same for all, wise and foolish, learned and simple; to all alike she declares the whole council of God; the Faith is one and the same in the heart of London, or the heart of China: she has one Faith and only one, one Way, one Redemption, one Salvation; and this she proclaims with the same insistence in every land and every clime, with the same unfaltering voice in the twentieth century as in the first. There is neither doubt nor hesitation in her message. Christ Jesus the Lord, to the Jews a stumbling-block, to the Greeks foolishness—but to them that believe, Christ the Power of God and the Wisdom of God.

She has no accommodation to offer, nor any reconstruction of her Faith to make; her Faith was the whole Truth of God two thousand years ago, neither more nor less: it is such to-day. The same living spirit teaches her to-day who taught her then: she teaches not the cunningly-devised fables of men, but the infallible Word of God.

You may enquire in what land you will and of whom you

like, and you will always receive the same response. One Saviour, one means of Redemption,—the Blood of the God-man. There is not a shadow of difference as to the facts of Faith, no matter what the difference in learning, condition or colour may be. Black and White, Brown and Blue, and any other colours there be, the wisest professor and the poorest beggar, alike possess the same saving Faith.

By this Faith the Church teaches all her children what they must believe and what they must do—what they must believe, because unless they know what to believe they cannot tell what they must do. It is only after the hearing that the soul can cry out: "What must I do to be saved?" And there is an intimate relation between Faith and Action. To be Living, Faith must be translated into Act, since Faith without works is dead. It is not enough to know the Truth, we must live it, and the Holy Ghost is in the Church to give both light to see and strength to do. The Church is not a mere sign-post, pointing the way and offering no means to attain it. She is both the way and the means: Spirit-taught as to what to say, and Spirit-quickened likewise to do.

From the first this marvellous unity has ever been hers; the unity of the First Pentecost when "all they that believed were of one heart and mind," has been increasingly manifested with the passing of the ages, and is more arresting and more evident to-day than ever before. True, there have been those who have gone out of her because not of her, but this is rather testimony to her unity than evidence against her. Had she been accommodating, she might have retained within her embrace both individuals and nations who are now without; but the Holy Ghost within her would suffer no compromise with truth, since she came into the world, like her Lord, to bear witness to the Truth.

She is one through the communication of the Body of the Lord, by which each soul is incorporated into the Christ-life, that as He lives by the Father, so they also live by Him. One, through the ministry by which the whole body is governed in due order, from the Holy Father down through all the ranks of the Sacred Hierarchy. The

wonders wrought by Grace through this ministry we can see day by day and in every land. A ministry so sublime that Angels might fear to embrace it, committed to earthen vessels, that the glory of God might the more appear. When the tremendous significance of this office is realized, man might well dread to embrace it, seeing the overwhelming demands it makes; but with the call is given likewise the indwelling strength of the Holy Ghost to fulfil it.

As the Bride of Christ manifests her unity to the world, so she manifests her sanctity. It is true that the things of the spirit are only spiritually apprehended, but just as the unity of the Church can be recognised externally, so can her sanctity. She calls all her children to be saints, she exists for nothing else, since her one end is to bring all her children into union with her God.

All her teaching is directed to the attainment of sanctity, but she not only calls her children to sanctity, she offers to each and all the means to attain it. The Sacraments and prayer, these are the means she offers to all, by which they may ascend to the heights of the supernatural life.

The gate by which souls enter the supernatural life is Baptism, whereby, re-born of water and the Spirit, they begin to live to God. There is also the participation in the Body of the Lord, by which Christ dwells in them and they in Him, and, nourished by His Own Divine Self, advance day by day till they are reformed to the express image of His likeness.

But not alone does she call her children to sainthood and provide them the means of obtaining it, but she has a multitude no man can number who in their own lives manifest sanctity in the most sublime and heroic degree.

For sanctity is the oneing of the soul with God. In full perfection it means this: the soul, even in this vale of tears, has her life in God, her will so oned with His that she does not swerve from it, even in desire.

Souls such as these are God's saints. Some are canonized, and the story of their triumph is told for our consolation and encouragement. But we must not think for a moment that the Saints are restrained within the narrow limits of a calendar; every calendar, no matter how full it be, must have its All Saints Day, for the days

of the year are utterly inadequate to celebrate the glories of that unnumbered host who make up the vast roll of the Saints of God.

Sanctity, as we have said, is union of the soul with God. The extraordinary manifestations God has given through so many of His Saints, their wonderful power over nature animate and inanimate, are special gifts bestowed on account of their mission rather than on account of their sanctity: the very shadow of Peter falling on the sick restored them to health.

These are the external signs of the presence of God's Spirit, and that Spirit is working in the Church to-day, and in the same marvellous way as at the first.

While we look at the sanctity of the Church we are met with an astounding and amazing sight. The Drunkard, the Harlot, the Sinner of every type—are the brothers and sisters of the Saints, because brothers and sisters of Jesus. How can you possibly reconcile the presence of saint and sinner, sinfulness and sinlessness, in this Church whose boast is the holiness of her children?

There are good people who are aghast; like the servants in the parable, they want to uproot the tares that seem to have sprung up so plentifully amidst the wheat and in their impetuous haste would root up the wheat along with them. This is an old enthusiasm. The good people were shocked at the sight of the Saviour not only sitting with publicans and sinners but actually eating with them.

It was a disreputable crowd that pressed around Him, and the guests sitting at the table were scandalized at the shameless entrance of the woman that was a sinner into their most respectable company.

England is rather like that. Religion and respectability have become interchangeable terms. The good people are before all things eminently respectable, and most anxious that no disreputable sinner shall shame their gatherings.

But Saints draw sinners, strange though it may seem, because sinners are sure that Saints will understand them, and so they are not afraid to draw nigh. There is a hard sort of goodness that repels but never attracts poor broken humanity.

Infinite Sanctity drew sinners just because of His sanctity. They knew His All-pitiful Heart would compassionate their misery and that He would stretch forth His Hand to heal, to pardon and forgive.

See that most appealing scene, where the good people bring the poor woman taken in adultery, in the very act, and with a callous shamelessness of which only the pious could possibly be capable, set her in the midst. But He raises not even His eyes to look at her: He will not inflict that wound on the poor sinner; but when condemned by their own hearts they have all gone forth, He speaks the word of peace: "Neither do I condemn thee; go in peace, and sin no more."

The most matchless manifestation of the sanctity of the Bride is her exhaustless pity for sinners; like her Lord she does not cast them out, but stretches charity almost beyond breaking-point to draw them in, uplift and help them up the steep ascent to Holiness and Heaven. She never despairs, even up to the last, trusting that in the very moment of the severance of soul and body, the sinner, however great his crime, may yet make an act of contrition and so find pardon although all but engulfed in the pit of Hell. She looks eagerly, wistfully for the smallest sign from eye, lips, or hand of the dying sinner, as a token of repentance, rejoicing if she may snatch at the last a brand from the burning, a soul from the Devil's grasp.

And her Catholicity is as wonderful as her Sanctity. She embraces all the world in her ministrations; there is not a nation or a people excluded from her inexhaustible zeal and untiring energy. The Divine Command to preach the Gospel and disciple all nations she fulfils with the same eager fervour after two thousand years have passed as she did at the beginning. Over the earth her children speed with unwearied devotion to bring the Gospel message with its blessed peace to the souls of men. None other is found like her in all the earth; the only one embracing all mankind.

There remains one other external sign of her inner life. She is the Church of the first Apostles of the Lord, unchanged and unchanging midst all the changing things of time. She is Apostolic.

She has never reconstructed her theology and she never will. She cannot be other in the twentieth century than she was in the first. She will not soften the "hard sayings of the Gospel" because men do not like them: she declares all the truth of God; she will hold nothing back; her work is to witness to the truth, not to alter it.

A young student, fired with the new ideas, met an old labourer out in the country, and began expounding his theories of human progress. Of course religion must progress too: this old out-of-date Catholic Church must give place to something more enlightened, something more acceptable to the cultivated taste of to-day. The old man let him ramble on and when he had finished, looking up at the sun in the heavens, said, "Well, the sun does not change, and I don't think Almighty God changes either."

So to the restless longing for change, the Bride of Christ opposes the eternal never-changing truth of God.

Then others declare she is ever-changing, and always innovating, that ever and again she joins some new dogmatic definition to the old, so that the faith she preaches varies with the passing of the years.

That is because they confound Truth and Definition. The whole Truth of God was there from the first instant of her life, but its definition has come through conflicts with false friends within and foes without, through revelations received by the Saints from God, bringing into fuller light and clearer detail all the marvellous beauty of His Truth. To behold more clearly and completely the perfection of a picture is not to add anything to it; we could not observe that perfection if it was not there for us to see.

It is thus that the Bride looks with loving eye upon that Truth committed to her by the Bridegroom, and the more she looks, the more she sees of its inexhaustible perfection. Each new beauty as it appears leads on to others yet unseen, but she never sees anything that was not in the Divine Picture from the first, and she never looks upon another. If men desire to present another to her gaze, she answers with the great Apostle: "Though an angel from heaven preach another Gospel than that which has been preached, let him be anathema."

Such is the Bride viewed from without, and wonderful as is the sight, it bears no comparison to her marvellous Spirit-life within. There the Holy Ghost Himself is engaged in the great work of transforming souls into the very life of God. This work never slackens, but goes forward with ever-quickening pace as the final consummation of all things draws near. Her life on earth has been all a warfare, and from her first beginning she has been in unceasing conflict, with the Saducees who thought her too supernatural, and with the Pharisees who thought her not supernatural enough. Kings and the great ones of the earth have stood up against her; they have cried that she sought to rob them of their power and to subjugate them to her sway, that her children could not be faithful to them and to her; they have fought against her and have not prevailed.

They said she was too worldly-wise and too wisely foolish, both too interfering and not interfering enough, that she was too much of earth and too much of heaven, too wrapt in Eternity, too absorbed in time.

She has passed through fierce and awful conflicts; there have been moments in her life when her enemies have felt that at last her time had come; but she arose victorious, yet with the scars of her dreadful wounds upon her, unconquered and unconquerable.

At other times she seemed to have vanquished all her foes with such completeness, that her enemies exclaimed: "See how we prevail nothing against her, all the world has gone after her."

But whether in the exultation of victory or the humiliation of seeming defeat, she is ever serene and confident, for she has the Holy Ghost within her and knows He cannot fail.

Her enemies have striven to trap her in her speech, and to twist and distort her words; all the craft of Hell has been employed against her, and yet she stands erect and triumphant, sees her most malignant and cruel foes prostrate in the dust; no weapons formed against her have prospered, none ever shall.

Her mightiest conflict is yet to be, for like her Lord her face is set stedfastly to Jerusalem, where her passion

is to be accomplished. Like Him she is to be crucified, and like Him to come through death to her deathless triumph and to her perfect consummation in Heaven.

But our view of the Bride would be very imperfect if we limited it to her life of warfare with the powers of darkness on earth: the most glorious life of the Bride is not on earth, but in Heaven. Her earthly life is transient and she hastens with impatient step to that final triumph when the numbers of God's elect shall be made up and her strife on earth be done. St. John in prophetic vision beheld the day, and saw her descending out of Heaven from God as a bride adorned for her husband.

Mark that vast host that through the ages has been pouring in through the golden gates, having washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. They live their life in God, participators in His Divinity, and whither they have arrived, we too, with all God's Elect shall one day come to partake of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

CHAPTER VIII

SOME FIRST NOTIONS OF PRAYER

Of all the wonderful gifts of God to man, surely prayer is one of the greatest. In the Church, His Bride, He gives His Grace through prayer and the Sacraments. The marvellous thing about prayer is, that there is no time and no place in which we may not pray; we cannot receive the Sacraments just whenever we will, but whenever we will we can pray, and so supremely important is it that the Apostle calls upon us to pray always.

How shall we describe this most blessed grace of prayer? It is the loving converse of the soul with God; it is the uplifting of the soul into God; or the loving beholding of God, as others express it.

Beginning with the first simple experiences, prayer carries the soul on and ever up, until finally she reaches that Blessed Union, even in this life, of which mere words can convey no conception.

The soul-word and the spoken-word have a relation with each other, in so far as the spoken-word is the external expression of the concept of the soul. The spoken-word differs in different lands, but the soul or mind-word is the same in all: if a Frenchman and Englishman and Chinaman were to think of a clock, the mind-word would be the same in all; the conception formed in the mind of all three would be exactly the same; but if they gave utterance to their thought, each would express it by a different sound.

It is so in prayer, which is sometimes expressed by means of the voice and is vocal, or voice-prayer, and sometimes remains immanent in the soul, and is mind-prayer, or mental prayer.

The way we make known our thoughts to each other is by way of speech, through the spoken word, for without speech the thought can only remain in the mind and cannot pass to another.

But God is a Spirit and needs no utterance of ours to

make known our desires to Him; He knows the most secret motions of the heart and all our needs before we speak to Him.

But vocal prayer has been blessed and accepted by Him, when it is the outward expression of the inward desire of the soul. The mere utterance of devout sounds, if the heart goes not with them, is both meaningless and only an insult to the great Creator and loving Lord with whom we would converse.

Prayer falls into two great divisions (1) the solemn public prayer of the mystical Bride, uttered with the voice, the prayer of the whole corporate body of God's elect on earth, and (2) private prayer, the intimate and personal intercourse between each individual soul and her Lord.

The value the Church sets upon prayer may be realised, when we remember that all priests and religious set apart for this great work, which the founder of Western Monasticism called "The Work of God," are bound to the recital of the Divine Office under pain of mortal sin. They are set apart for a public work, to be the voice of the mystical body of Christ, sending forth her ceaseless round of praise and petition, laud and thanksgiving unto the Great Lord of all.

Public prayer does not depend on the number of those offering it, but upon those who offer it having been solemnly appointed to this office. One duly appointed praying alone is offering public prayer, while a number together may be only offering private prayer.

The Divine Office is the foundation of this wonderful circle of prayer, with its Psalter of David, that incomparable outpouring of the soul to God, without equal in the literature of the world. When we read these matchless expressions of the hopes and fears, the joys and the sorrows of his soul, or the passion of his repentance we understand the sense in which David is spoken of as "the man after God's own heart."

Listen to the cry that comes from him in that exquisitely sorrowful fiftieth Psalm: "Have mercy upon me, O God, after Thy great mercy, and according to the multitude of Thy mercies blot out mine iniquity." "Against Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight." And

again : "Make in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." With what perfection he gives utterance to those emotions that overwhelm the soul, when she has really come to a knowledge of herself, seen her miserable ingratitude, despicable meanness and senseless folly. And that last most pleading verse : "The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, shalt Thou not despise." No wonder that Psalm became one of the favourite prayers of the Children of Israel in their exile at Babylon, and that, like a Doxology, they added those last two verses, to express the sorrowful longing of their hearts : "O be favourable and generous unto Syon : build Thou the walls of Jerusalem."

These Psalms were the comfort and consolation of God's ancient church through all her vicissitudes, in her moments of triumph, in her moments of grief and blank despair ; no wonder they passed on to the true Bride as a most precious heritage, and that she has used them to express all the most ardent aspirations of her children and made them the very frame-work of that round of prayer and praise which through the years she ever offers to the Lord.

These spiritual songs of our exile have been the strength and stay of God's people these two thousand years, expressing all the emotions of the human heart in all its ever-changing and ever-varying experience ; always adequate, always meetly voicing the profoundest depths of spiritual joy and sorrow, they have been sung alike in moments of overmastering and overshadowing grief, and in moments of intoxicating joy ; and as our life stretches out towards its ending, and we look back, we can see how wonderfully the spirit has spoken to us through them. They come to us hallowed with a thousand most precious and sacred associations ; they reach back through all the ages of the past, they reach forward to ages yet to be, equally fitting our moments of most rapturous exaltation and most heart-breaking sorrow.

And the Bride has broidered them with precious ornament of antiphons and hymns and canticles weaving them together into one majestic whole in the slow passing of the years. Each century has added somewhat to this precious store.

How lovingly has the Bride composed this liturgical circle of the year, celebrating the life-story of the Bridegroom, heralding His coming in the solemn season of Advent with the marvellous series of antiphons expressive of her ardent longing; rejoicing in the glorious festival of His Nativity; on the Epiphany celebrating His showing to the Gentiles; thence, through the succeeding days, telling forth the story of His hidden and public life; through the great forty days, setting forth His conflict with the powers of darkness; the brief triumph of Palm Sunday; the tremendous Sacrifice of Calvary; the glory of His Resurrection and His triumphant Ascension into Heaven.

After the story of the Bridegroom, she tells of her own birth at Pentecost, sings the wonders of the Most Precious Body at Corpus Christi, and scatters through the year the feasts of His Saints, like jewels on some glorious diadem, welding it all into one glorious and exultant act of loving praise and adoration to the Lamb.

Such is the public liturgy which the Bride offers as her tribute to the Bridegroom. In solemn choirs of cloistered monks and nuns, in the brooding splendour of vast cathedrals or solitary and alone in most unexpected spots, this great chorus of adoration is ever rising up before the Throne of God. There have been monasteries of old time where the voice of prayer was never silent by day or night, an earthly reflection of the adoring worship of Heaven.

You who have this precious privilege of forming part of the Royal Court of the King, have reason to be full of gratitude that He has chosen you for this work. As you sing these praises in the choir, ever and again will the Spirit show you new meaning in these inspired utterances of long ago, a light will suddenly flash upon you and you will wonder it had never come before. These are the inexhaustible treasures of His Glory, and every day as it passes you will realise more and more how precious they are, and also His goodness in calling you to sing here below to the praise of His Glory.

But we must pass on to that other prayer, the private individual intercourse of the soul with her Creator and Redeemer.

No forms are prescribed for none are needed. I cannot

help thinking how much souls have been hindered in their approach to God by the strange tendency to confound public and private prayer together, and try to apply to one that which belongs to the other.

The solemn liturgical worship of Public Prayer is the state solemnity in the Court of the King; private prayer the intimate converse of the King with His friends.

I always dread the appearance of another prayer-book, we are flooded with them already; for it seems to me that they do more to stifle prayer than help it. When we come to talk to our King, He wants to hear the real aspirations of our hearts, not what other people have printed for us to say to Him.

We want fewer prayer-books and more prayer.

Alas! how often we hear: "Oh, I've got such a lot to get through, I must set to work at once!" And that is just what it is, "getting through" a mass of most excellently conceived utterance, which, most likely, does not in the least express the needs of the soul who is using it. The spirit of prayer is stifled and strangled in this atmosphere of print. Our Fathers had no prayer-books, and manuscripts were few and far between, but they did know how to pray, because not held back, crushed and overburdened with a mass of vocal prayers, uttered too often without either head or heart having any place in them.

No: let us just become like little children, and speak to our God, with something of that lovable simplicity that children have. God is not going to look critically, like a schoolmaster, at the grammar of our prayers. He desires to hear our heart speaking, and wants us to come to Him with the loving trustful confidence of a child to his mother.

The first thing we need is *Simplicity*. You know how simple children are, how delightful the frank fearlessness with which they give utterance to their thoughts. God wants the like of us; direct, straight and simple should be the speech we have with Him. The second is *Reality*. There is nothing we hate so much as affectation and pretence, the mere playing of a part. But if, in intercourse with each other, we find it is so repellent, how much more hateful it is when we have to do with The Eternal Reality

Himself. Above all else, let us be real. Strange as it may seem, people often appear to think they must express themselves in an unreal way when they come to speak with God. They must say things they do not in the least mean, and very often only succeed in deceiving themselves.

A certain congregation were singing with tremendous fervour: "O Paradise, O Paradise, I greatly long for thee," and as the volume of sound rolled up to the organ loft, the caustic old organist remarked: "They would be frightened out of their wits if they found themselves there: they are quite satisfied to hold on here as long as they can." And there was much truth in his criticism.

What is the good of saying to God, "I would rather die a thousand deaths than commit one venial sin!" if the speaker hasn't the least idea of wanting to do anything of the sort.

It may be, when we are real, we shall be rather ashamed of ourselves. Away with all this affectation and let us get right down to the foundation: let us be straight and true, tell God everything that is in our heart—all our hopes and desires—and never say to Him what we do not mean. That is quite a different thing to what we do not feel: what we feel is of little importance. What we mean, what we will, is all important.

Then let us have *Actuality* in our prayers. Speak to Him of the real actual things that concern us here and now. "What things?" you may say. Everything: for there is not a thing that concerns us that does not concern Him. He is interested in everything that concerns us: any little temporal trial, every little cross, every little disappointment, all the manifold irritations and petty little troubles of our daily round: He is concerned in them all. He wants us to tell Him all about them, although He knows everything already; it is through prayer that He has promised to help us. He Who rules the movements of all the suns and stars is yet concerned with the child crying in his grief over a broken toy. The Heart of God has a tenderness and pitifulness for all our griefs and sorrows, infinitely beyond anything we can conceive or think.

We come to Him then with all our sorrows, but not only so, with all our joys too; He is a friend who will

rejoice with us as well as sorrow with us. Too often we forget it, and only turn to Him in our griefs. Let us share both joy and sorrow alike with Him; we shall not regret it, for He is always a sympathetic listener. Earthly friends may grow tired and weary, but He is ever the same, attending to us as if we were the only soul in all His great Universe. Who shall describe the inexpressible consolation, the sweet comfort and the tranquil peace, even in the midst of the most unutterable sorrow, this wonderful intercourse brings into the soul who has once begun to walk the way of interior prayer? The soul knows never a circumstance or a happening in which she may not turn with entire confidence and pour it all out into the listening ears of her God and her Lover.

This may seem the language of exaggeration to those who are strangers to the wonders of the Lord's gracious dealing with His children; but those who have indeed tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious, they can only say with the Queen of Sheba: "The half was not told to me."

Then we want *Attention* when we have speech of our King. What a contrast betwen attention and inattention. We feel instinctively, when we are in conversation, whether the one to whom we are speaking is really attentive or not. Some people answer in a way that clearly shows that their minds are miles off, and that they are all the while thinking of something entirely different from that of which they are speaking.

When we are before Our Lord, let us be all attention, with all earnestness speaking to Him out of the abundance of our heart. Our whole being should go out to Him in those wonderful moments when we have these intimate conversations with Him; we must be attentive to hear what He has to say to us. He has much to say, if only we will have the grace to be silent and listen.

Last of all our prayers must be *Persevering*. And Our Lord has drawn a wonderful picture to impress this necessity upon our heart. A friend arrives in the night and his host has nothing to set before him: so he goes to the house of his neighbour and begins asking for bread to set before his guest. His neighbour is comfortably in bed

and in no mood to be disturbed; but the incessant knocking allows him no rest and so, although he will not arise because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he gives to him.

Our Saviour would have us persevere in prayer, so that, even if God seems to deny what we ask, we should persevere, sure that if it is for God's greater glory He will not refuse the petition of His servant.

Not only does our Saviour impress upon us the necessity of prayer, but He has given us a model on which all our prayer shall be based—the "Our Father," familiar to us from earliest childhood, coming to us consecrated with a thousand sacred memories. *Our Father*—not, as you would think more natural, *My Father*—not "my" but "our," because He would have us realise that we come before one who is the Father of us all, the Father of every soul that dwells under Heaven; that our claim to be heard is just that He is our Father, the Father not of a select few, but of the whole human race.

"*Who art in Heaven.*" Why "in Heaven?" Because Heaven is the place of His manifested glory, where adoring Angels and Saints do Him unceasing service and worship, and again because "Heaven is one day to be our portion," and we shall be there with Angels and Saints to praise Him through all the ages of Eternity.

True, He is without us and within us and all around us, yet it is not to His presence thus that we more frequently direct our prayer, but rather to His presence in the Royal Court of Heaven, the dwelling-place of His Glory where His Elect behold Him face to face.

"*Hallowed be Thy Name.*" To hallow means to consecrate, to sanctify, and so we pray that His Name may be everywhere had in reverence and adoration, and that all may come to adore Him in spirit and in truth.

"*Thy Kingdom come.*" First of all in this poor heart of mine. May His kingdom be established there and may He reign as King, and may naught of earth ever intrude to dispute His supreme and absolute dominion. May all the things of earth and "all the vain things that charm me most" be cast forth, that my heart may be wholly and altogether His and His alone.

Then, may His kingdom be established on this earth; may His Bride extend her sway in ever-widening influence, amongst every tribe and kindred and tongue that dwells under Heaven. May she triumph and her enemies be cast down, and may she draw within herself an ever-increasing multitude of souls and perfect them for their destined place in Heaven. May His kingdom come in final and triumphant power; may the number of His Elect be swiftly made complete, and the work of His Bride finished, that His everlasting kingdom may come in all the splendour of its majesty and power.

"*Thy Will be done on earth.*" Yes, and how?—"*as it is in Heaven.*" As the Saints and Angels are doing it this moment before the Great White Throne, doing it with such absolute and utter perfection that the will of that vast multitude is the will of One, and that One their Lord. Heaven is Heaven because there God's Holy Will is perfected in every one of His creatures. They are so uplifted to that glorious participation in His Divinity that all their actions are deified. Words are but a feeble and halting medium to express the wonder of this unity of the Elect with their God, a oneness that nothing shall sever. A oneness by identity between them and His Divine Nature in which they are participators.

The perfection of the creature on earth, the one true happiness of the soul, is only found when she is, as far as is possible in this land of exile, thus oned with God. Would that souls might know this in very truth, and then, if they did, they would possess peace even in the midst of strife, a peace that no happening of time, however heart-breaking, however crushing, and however overwhelming, could ever touch or for one instant distract.

"*Give us this day our daily bread.*" This day, to-day's bread, not to-morrow's. How many want God to anticipate their needs. They have the needs of to-day, and yet are filled with dread for the morrow. After all their knowledge of His loving-kindness and the experience that the promised bread and water does not fail, they are yet fretful and fearful. Take no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for itself, and besides, there may be no to-morrow.

Anxiety about the future only makes us unfit to do our duty in the present.

We ask first for the meat that perishes, for He knows we must have clothing, food and drink and some sort of shelter to cover us, and He will provide; not a year in advance, but each day as it dawns with its needs shall also bring His supplies.

Then we want the supernatural bread of His Grace. Without it we are helpless indeed. To-day's Grace for to-day, not to-morrow's Grace to-day. How often a soul will say: "Oh, I am all right to-day, but how shall I get on to-morrow? There is that trial and that temptation which I am sure will come then."

Be not fearful: to-morrow's trials will also find you with to-morrow's Grace to meet them; besides, the thing we fear rarely happens; something else happens that we never dreamed of, but not the thing we feared. The Devil cares nothing how he disturbs and troubles us so that he succeeds in doing so. So cast all your care upon your Lord, Whose care for you is a million times more than all the care you can possibly take for yourselves.

Then we pray for the life-giving Body and Blood of the Lord, the Living Bread from Heaven, that each day He may vouchsafe to come in His Divine and Human Nature and make His home in the humble dwelling-place of our heart.

"*And forgive us our trespasses.*" Yes we know we need forgiveness badly, poor, wretched and wayward as we are, who stumble and fall so often and so badly, despite the amazing loving-kindness and extraordinary compassion of His inexhaustible love. We are such a wretched disappointment to Him as well as to ourselves that we do realise how greatly we need His pitiful all-pardoning forgiveness. Yes, but in what way?—"*as we forgive those that trespass against us.*" How do we forgive those that trespass against us? Is our forgiveness big, generous, penetrated with the "Father, forgive them" of Calvary, or is it grudging, so often expressed by the impatient, "Oh, well, I'll forgive, but I'll never forget?" Now, do we want Him to forgive like that? We know we do not.

Well, then, let our forgiveness be as big, full and generous as that which we ask of Him

In the passions roused by the great war, how quickly even good people relapsed into paganism, and ministers of religion gave utterance to sentiments that could only shame the Christian name. But we have not so learned of Christ, Who, when the nails were driven through, implored forgiveness for His murderers, not when they had repented, but while they were in the very act of doing Him to death.

One thing always struck me about the passion of hate during the war, that it was not the men facing death in the battle line, but those safe at home who had never been to war, who were the most unbridled in the curses they called down on the foe. In the line when the morning broke with an awful shelling, the men only said: "Poor old Fritz has got up with a sore head this morning"; and when it was our turn and the enemy trenches were being plastered with shells, he could say, "Sorry for poor old Fritz, he's having a rough time to-day."

We have to forgive as we hope to be forgiven, and to forgive every injury, however cruel it may sometimes be. It is hard to nature to forgive, but easy to Grace. If anyone has injured us very badly, let us pray for them very fervently: we cannot hate those for whom we pray. Remember he permits it all: they would not perform that act under which I smart so bitterly unless He permitted it. You say: "But I never gave them any reason to act in that way." No, but people are not much moved by reason—good people least of all.

So, let us love—not merely our friends, but our enemies. Love them, and bless them. "Well," you say, "that takes a lot of doing": so it does; and without the Holy Ghost within us we cannot do it, but with Him within, all things are possible.

"*And lead us not into temptation.*" A strange prayer at first sight, for you would not think God wanted to lead anyone into temptation, and yet no single temptation of world, flesh or devil can assail us without His permissive will. The Devil can only tempt as far as God permits and no farther. So this petition is not as strange as it seems.

We pray that His Grace may be in us, and that in every temptation His Providence permits we may have a victorious issue.

Man's life on earth is a warfare, as long as we breathe here below we shall be in conflict. The world, the flesh and the devil will rave against us, but strong though they be, fierce though at times the onset of temptation, black the night and savage the raging tempest, if we use the Grace the Spirit gives, we shall never fail. A temptation never befalls a man without a corresponding grace to resist.

"*But deliver us from evil.*" There is only one evil in this world and that is Sin. Sin is the sole and only real evil. To turn away from God and try to satisfy our soul-hunger with creatures, there is the real evil, an evil so great because, unless repented of, it will carry us to Hell.

Pain and suffering, far from being evils, may carry us to the height of sanctity. Many a soul would never have turned to God at all had not some terrible pain or heart-freezing grief opened their eyes to the utter vanity of all things here below. Deliver us from the Evil—the one awful, terrifying evil of eternal damnation, the final doom of the impenitent sinner.

Let us flee sin as a serpent, beware of the smallest fault and we shall escape the greatest. How often souls fall little by little, through small trifling sins that seem to be nothing and yet finally drag the soul down to perdition.

There is the sum and substance of all prayer, gathered up in those wonderful petitions given by the Lord Himself. They show us the lines on which we should go, the way of approach to the Loving Heart of our God. What a relief it is to talk over our anxieties and sorrows with some loyal, faithful friend: how we come away cheered and quickened with new courage. Who shall measure the strength a friend can impart to one stricken with grief and sorrow? But if conversation with a friend, cumbered by the slow process of human speech, brings such rest and relief to the soul, what of the conversation with God where spirit speaks with spirit and where in the silence of our heart the Spirit Himself helps our infirmity, "with groanings which cannot be uttered"? Ah! the sweet

relief that this communion with our God brings to the soul when she is overshadowed with sorrow and crushed by grief passes all telling. God takes the soul into His compassionate embrace and in a moment lifts her up out of sorrow and pain and pours in His own most marvellous peace and sweet tranquility. We may be and often are disappointed when we turn to creatures, but never when we turn to Him.

CHAPTER IX

DETACHMENT

Everyone desires peace, but only the few are ready to pay the price. We can never possess true peace of the heart unless we do pay the price that the Saviour demands. The peace He came to give is so wonderful, so exceeding human conception, that it is no marvel if the price is high: "Peace I give to you; My peace I leave to you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you."

To possess this peace we must give our all: we must be detached from all things, all places, all persons, and finally from ourselves. Attachment and detachment: how little difference in the spelling, but how great a gulf between the things they express. It is extraordinary, how we ever tend downwards, how this poor soul of ours is ever ready to lay hold on the things of time, although she knows so well that there is nothing abiding under the sun, that everything here below will surely fail us and that the only question about it is—When?

The way of peace is to empty our soul of every attachment to anything created, to empty ourselves of all that is not God. You can see quite well that this is the way, and the only way of interior peace: How can the soul ever enjoy peace if she is attached to anything that must pass with time? You know it, I know it, we all know it through the hard school of experience, and it is only when we have torn everything out of our heart and made the full surrender of our all to our King that we begin to taste the blessed peace which He came to bring us.

First of all we must detach ourselves from affection to all things, material things I mean. It is astonishing how much we can be attached to them. You see people who are so attached to their goods that you dare not so much as move a thing in their room, or they are up in a moment. If some trifle is lost or broken they are disconsolate. Some are very artistic, and they must have everything artistic around them; that can become a very

tyranny unless we set out with resolute determination to break it. Others are attached to religious objects—rosaries, medals, pictures—all good in themselves. But, after all, what is the use of having half a dozen rosaries, when we can only use one at a time? We must become totally detached from everything, be as willing to be without a thing as with it. It is not the mere not having, but the not desiring things that we must practise.

What an astonishing thing it is sometimes to find a religious who has sacrificed great possessions to enter on the way of perfection still clinging to some unimportant trifle, to which she would never have given a thought in the world. It does not matter how small or unimportant the thing is, as long as we cling to it. We are held: a thread or a rope are equally fatal and prevent our obtaining the glorious liberty which God wills to be ours. If there is a thing to which we find that we have an attachment, let us get rid of it, make the full surrender, the full renunciation, and hold nothing back.

I have often been struck with the strange ways in which people are attached to things: with one it is an old prayer-book, tattered and torn—but you must not take it away: indeed, you hardly dare look at it. With another it is old brass: it matters not what, so that it is old. But there it is, the soul is held fast in it. And so one might go on, one attachment after another. Little things, trifles. Yes; but just the very things that hold back the soul from the completeness of the sacrifice.

Then there is the attachment to place. How strong it is, and how easy to become attached. If we find it easy to become attached to things, it is ten-fold easier to become attached to places. It is not the intrinsic beauty of the place: that has little or nothing to do with it.

I remember, long years ago, we had to close one of the most miserable courts down Whitechapel, a place into which the sun never penetrated, and yet, when we had to get these poor people out, how unwilling they were to go. Astonishing as it may seem, they were attached to that place, so miserable that you would have thought they would rather have rejoiced to leave it. No: they were attached to it. No matter what the place may be,

if the soul is once attached, it is a fearful wrench to get away.

You know, in the Society of Jesus they attach great importance to this question of detachment. So the young novice goes out for his weekly walk, and when he comes home finds his cell changed, generally for the worse: the last one had a fine view from the window, this has none. Even in religion you can get attached to a place. Perhaps you only discover it when the order comes to leave; "You will leave for such a place to-morrow morning." This is the test: to be ready, without a ripple disturbing the surface of our soul, to leave the place in which we have spent years and go to a place we have never seen.

We are strangers and pilgrims here below and we must never forget it. This is not the place of our rest. Heaven —that, and that alone—is our home, and everything here below we are to look at as something passing on which we must never set our heart. We are *en route* for Heaven, and when you are *en route* you are only concerned with getting to your destination as quickly as possible.*

It is hard work to get detached from places and things, but hardest of all to become detached from persons. How even insensibly, without ever in the least knowing it, this attachment to persons creeps in. It is so natural, especially if we are of a warm and affectionate nature. Some people I know are like ice: but with most of us it is not so. Love, natural love, is strong within us.

The circle of a family where love is ardent is bound together by that strong tie. I remember a poor little girl, whose brother was at the front, said to me: "God must not take him. He can't have him. If he goes I

*Cf. "Une Petite Sœur" (Maurice Landrieux, Vicaire Général de Reims), 5e édition, chap. II., p. 29 (Répouse).

"Il y a deux facons de voyager: voyage d'affaires et voyage d'agrément. Quand on voyage en touriste, il importe que la route soit intercssante, à un titre quelconque. Mais, quand on va pour arriver, l'état des chemins devient secondaire. Tout mieux s'ils sont bons et agréables: L'essentiel, c'est qu'ils mènent au but, que de gens marchent ainsi uniquement préoccupés d'arriver, indifferents aux details de la route."

shall die." To leave the home circle and all dear and precious to us is just like death, for it is the strongly affectionate nature that God calls. But the love of the Lord overcomes, and with a tremendous struggle they wrench themselves free that they may give their all to God.

But entering religious life, how often we find we have to die again. What? Is not once enough? Why that leaving of home?—unless it was for God alone, we never could have done it!

And yet again human affection springs up, and the very thing we had left, as we thought for ever, finds a place in our hearts once more. A religious said to me, when separation came from another to whom he had become attached: "I thought I was detached, and now I find I am not." He wandered about restless and unsatisfied, with a void in his heart. Why? Because a human attachment had entered in. Little Sister Teresa was always grateful for the fact that she had so severe a noviciate, for with her ardent, affectionate nature, how easily she might have left the world only to find again in the Cloister the very thing she had renounced. Those warm, affectionate natures that can give God so great a glory are the very ones that are tempted most in this way. So they can never be too careful or watchful, for attachments grow insensibly, and it is only when we find a blank restlessness in the absence of the one to whom we have become attached that we realise how far we have gone. Let us see we are not caught and entangled. We must "stand fast in the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free."

There was a dear child who understood this well, and said to me one day: "There! I have given up all. I have utterly rooted out of my heart love of father, mother, brother and sisters, and henceforth I only love them in God."

We must be detached from all persons, and last of all from ourselves.

How hard a task that is, to be really and in truth detached from our own selves. The farther we go, and the more the light of God's Truth shines within us, the

more we realise in how many mean, contemptible little ways we are attached to ourselves. It is so very easy and so very natural to be attached, and yet we must make this final detachment if we are to possess the peace of God.

That means detachment even from all sensible spiritual consolations, since they, too, are not God and He alone is the only One to Whom we may safely be attached. That is our work: to detach ourselves entirely from all that is not God, to seek Him alone, not to seek His consolations and sweetnesses, but His Own Divine Self, that, passing through all that is not Himself, we may become one spirit with Him.

It is strange how some expect God to be always giving them sensible sweetness and sensible consolation. They are seeking not Him but themselves, and their own satisfaction, the pleasure that comes from these visitations. We must mount above all these and seek only our conformation to the express image of the Divine Likeness. Then we shall have His true peace which passes all understanding, because our soul, passing all consolations of sense and spirit, will have to come to the possession, as far as possible in this life, of God, of His very Self:

"O Jesus, from all things of earth
May I be rent apart.
So shall I make my dwelling there
Deep in Thy Sacred Heart."

CHAPTER X

MORTIFICATION OF FLESH AND SPIRIT

The soul can only be united to her Lord when, by means of detachment, she has emptied herself of creatures and all affection to creatures. She can only attain to this detachment through the continual practice of mortification, both of flesh and spirit.

As the soul lives her life in the body, this body must be mortified and brought into subjection to the spirit, and the spirit again into subjection to God. To expect to attain to perfect mortification of the spirit without mortification of the flesh is like expecting a child to run before he has yet learned to walk.

Corporal penance is necessary, and is preliminary to the far more difficult task of spirit-penance. Those who try to persuade the soul aspiring after perfection that corporal penance is not necessary lead her sadly astray. "The body of this death," as the Apostle so aptly calls it, is all too ready to revolt against the spirit, "for the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh," and until it is so subdued by penance and mortification that it instinctively obeys the command of the soul, there can be no subjugation of the whole man to the Spirit of Christ.

All the Saints of past ages have practised corporal mortification. If they, who attained such heights of sanctity, were unable to come there without: "mortifying through the spirit the lusts of the flesh," it is surely rather presumptuous of us to suppose we can dispense with it.

We are warned against the dangers of excessive corporal penance, as though Belgravia was scourging itself to blood and the rest of the country penancing itself on bread and water; and besides, we are reminded that our bodies are so weak and feeble, compared to those who have gone before, that they cannot possibly support the austere penances and terrible mortifications of former days.

The war has answered all that. The youth and middle age of the country crossed the seas and on the battle front of France and Flanders endured, without faltering,

penance, equalling if not exceeding the most terrifying mortifications of any age.

Long hours in trenches filled with icy water; clothes sodden to the skin and unchanged for weeks; a few hours' sleep rolled up in a blanket in the mud of a dug-out, huddled together, a steaming mass of humanity; a few hard biscuits for food; days and nights without sleep; fighting, marching with the heavy load of pack, rifle, gas masks and ammunition—human nature endured all that in this twentieth century, not for a few weeks, for five long years, and endured it with marvellous and uncomplaining patience. And the girls who crossed the seas were nothing behind the boys in splendid endurance, intrepid sacrifice and unfailing cheerfulness under it all. Never again can it be said that our bodies cannot bear the penances, or practise the mortifications our forefathers bore. Let the truth be told. We are unwilling to bear the mortifications of olden days, or of any days for that matter. It is the will that is wanting. If we think of all the inconceivable suffering endured for a temporal kingdom, how wretchedly mean our own unwillingness for mortification appears, when we remember that with us it is for an everlasting kingdom: "They strive for a temporal crown, but we for an eternal."

We have not the will to penance, and so we stand still and make no progress in the spiritual life. While some, with one breath declare against corporal penance, with the other they affirm that spiritual penance is all that is needed to-day, ignoring the experience of all the ages and of all the saints, who proclaim with one voice the need of bodily penance, if we would attain spiritual mortification or indeed if we would save our souls at all: "I beat down my body and bring it into subjection, lest after having preached to others, I myself should become a castaway." Be sure of this; unless this body of ours is crushed and beaten down into subjection to the spirit, it will drag the spirit down with it into perdition.

The soul draws in its knowledge of things without by means of her five senses, five windows, as Walter Hylton calls them in the "Scale of Perfection." "These are the five senses by which thy soul goeth out of herself, and

fetcheth her delight and seeketh her feeding in earthly things, contrary to the nobility of her own nature. As by the eye to see curious and fair things, and so of the other senses."*

These five senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell convey all their perceptions to the *common sense* of the soul, which receives and unifies them all.

Sight is the most wonderful of these senses, by which the soul looks upon all the things external to herself. How necessary is penance here, for how easily the eyes are the windows through which death enters. See how it entered through the eyes of our first parents, when they beheld the tree delightful to look upon. See how David was pierced by a single glance and fell into the most grievous sin of his life.

The mortification of the eyes means the exercise of continual restraint, so that they always obey the will, look only when the soul wills they should look, observe only when she bids them observe.

Two persons go out into the streets; one returns carrying with him the images of a hundred things he has seen, the other returns bringing nothing. Why? Because in the one case the eyes were under control and in the other they were not. To gain this control we must not merely turn away the eyes from unlawful things, but often turn them away, when we might lawfully look, in order to obtain that complete mastery over them which is necessary if the soul within is to be at peace.

You can tell the unmortified soul at once; the eyes looking everywhere at everything, the quick turn of the head to see whence and where.

The advice given to the Altar-servers of a certain church is to the point: "If the roof of the church falls in behind you, you must not turn your head to look." That the lesson had been to a good purpose was proved, when one Sunday during High Mass an unfortunate lunatic entered the church, going through the most extraordinary contortions before he was removed. The boys went on with the ceremonial as if nothing unwonted was happening.

* The Scale of Perfection, by Walter Hylton (ed. Dalgairns, 1908), Book I., Part III., cap. IX., p. 115.

Very intimately connected with the sense of Sight is that of *Hearing,* a faculty indeed scarcely second to it in importance. As the eye beholds all that comes under its observation, so the ear apprehends all the sounds conveyed to it from without.

The ear is extraordinarily sensitive to the least sound that reaches it, whether it be the ceaseless beating of the waves on the shore, the roll of thunder, the sweet song of birds or the sweeter song of the human voice; the shattering crash of a bursting shell, the soft sighing of the wind in the branches on a summer's day, or the rage of the tempest on a stormy night. And each sound produces its differing emotions in the soul.

But there are other sounds than these that fall upon the ear; the blasphemies against God and His Christ, the voice that calls the soul to sin, almost compelling in its importunate instancy.

We must be unsparing in mortifying the sense of hearing, striving so to control it, that we hear alone what the soul wills and are deaf to what she wills not.

How often one who is musical cannot restrain the manifestation of feeling at some badly executed piece, unless by continual penance the faculty has been so brought under control that, however distressing the sounds that assail the ear, no external sign of annoyance is suffered to appear. We must remember the old proverb: "Believe nothing you hear, and only half you see!" and we shall save a world of trouble. How much needless suffering we should avoid, if we held silence about the things we hear, as well as those we see. We must be very often deaf, as well as blind, if we would keep our soul unsullied by sin.

What a thrill can pass through the soul from a single *touch,* for good or evil. The pressure of a hand, without a word, from a friend, in the midst of great sorrow; what strength it can convey. And one touch can set a soul on fire of Hell. All the long silent furies of lust can be quickened into life in a moment by it, so potent a power does touch exercise, and so swiftly is its perception conveyed to the soul.

Taste is a fastidious sense and a tyrannical master, never

more so than now, for ours is a fanciful, delicate age, self-indulgent beyond all that has gone before it. We see it even in children: "I don't like this, I don't fancy that!" And the dear child must have his whim satisfied, no matter how unaccountable it be. How different to the old days when it was: "Very well, wait till you come to." And the table was cleared, and nothing had until the next meal, by which time the child had indeed "come to" and was ready to eat anything.

Fasting is the best cure for fancifulness. If there is a dish we like, we should pass it and help ourselves to that we like less. Practise one act of mortification at every meal, and thus the unruly appetite will be brought into subjection.

Threequarters of the people who wander from Spa to Spa for their cure would be perfectly all right if they kept the Lenten fast. People die from eating too much, not too little, in our days. In how many cases, when the doctor is called in, what has he to do but prescribe fasting, under a more fashionable name.

The trenches proved a splendid cure, better than any Spa, or the most scientific treatment. The bread managed to accumulate a fair amount of mud on the way up, and the meat was just a trifle gritty: it had only been tumbled over in the mud by the wayside. The tea got mixed with the sugar; the cheese and the jam had a habit of amalgamating. Still the keen air produced keen appetites, not much troubled by such trifles. "I never said my grace so fervently in all my life as I did over my bit of hard biscuit!" remarked one of our boys in the Ypres sector.

The sense of *Smell* is more strongly developed in some than in others, but it is possessed by all in a greater or less degree.

Some are so fanciful that everything they use and have around them must be scented to satisfy their fastidious sense; and the least encounter with anything unpleasant will produce an expression of face that is a correct index of what they feel. A mortified soul will give no sign, either of pleasure or displeasure, no matter how strongly she may be affected.

The front gave plenty of opportunity to mortify this

sense; as you went up the line in the dark your sense of smell soon informed you that you were in the forward area.

We can see a little now the way along which we must practise penance, to reduce our body to its right position and prevent it being a drag on the soul.

But there is the further and the more difficult work of spiritual mortification.

The *Common Sense* must be so mortified that it rules the other senses and accepts or refuses their impressions as the soul determines.

The *Imagination* is a more powerful faculty than the Common Sense; for while the latter can only receive the impressions actually received from without by the perceiving senses, the imagination can fashion all sorts of images of places and persons, independently of what it receives through the Common Sense.

Picture succeeds picture, as the imagination with amazing skill and rapid stroke sets them before the mind. There is no faculty where mortification has so much scope as here: for unless restrained, the imagination will dominate the soul.

The *Intellect* is the highest faculty of all, where thought presents its various concepts; discerns, discusses, judges, accepts or rejects them.

God takes account of our every thought, as well as of our every deed. All our thoughts, good and bad, shall have their reward; each thought is an act, even although it has no external manifestation.

Man looks upon the outward appearance, but God upon the heart. Our thoughts are soul-acts as distinct from material-acts, so that a sin deliberately consented to and consummated in thought is just as much a sin as one committed in outward act.

Where our thoughts are, there also are we. What we think, that we become, and good thoughts within produce good works without.

We have to keep ceaseless vigil over the direction and tendency of our thoughts, arresting them instantly we perceive they tend in the direction of evil; and sometimes even our good thoughts must be restrained, because the soul must control her thought and not be controlled by it.

We can tell the state of our soul by the habitual direction of our thoughts.

The *Memory* also plays a great part in our interior life. It recalls the past with such surprising vividness and sets it before us with such force and intensity, that the past appears as if present.

No impression is ever really lost; it may be dormant for long years, and then, in a moment, the memory may draw it forth and set it before us again.

The soul's *passions* of *love* and *hate, joy* and *sorrow, hope* and *fear, desire, aversion* and *anger,* are always in action, and the soul can only be at rest when they have been completely mortified by the indwelling power of the Holy Ghost.

Love is the strongest and noblest of these passions, and likens us most to God, since God is Love. Love is most to be desired and most to be feared; most to be desired when its object is God, most to be feared when it is set on creatures. It can be the soul's greatest good and also her greatest ill; everything depends on the object to which it is attracted.

The soul that has once tasted the blessedness of supernatural love, and begun to experience the interior sweetness of the Divine Presence, abandons everything for the object of her love; suffering, pain and sacrifice become delightful to her, as they are the manifestation on her part of the love she bears her Love. She loves Him for Himself alone and all other she loves for His sake.

But when the soul turns the love that of right belongs wholly to God and pours it out upon creatures, then her greatest good becomes her greatest ill. Once two souls have been caught in the passion of natural love, nothing can divide them: they will rather go to Hell together than to Heaven separately.

Hatred and Love are never far apart. We must hate nothing save sin, and while we must always hate the sin we must always love the sinner. It is so easy to confound sin and the sinner and so difficult to separate them.

We have to keep ceaseless watch over the rising of hatred in our hearts. Sometimes it originates out of a mere trifle; beginning with a feeling of dislike, it grows

until the very sight of a person inflames the passion of hate to a white heat.

Once this hatred has taken possession, everything the particular person does will appear wrong, however excellent it may really be. Hatred beholds everything under one colour and the object of its enmity can do no good.

What extraordinarily good haters pious people are, especially towards each other! If two devout people fall out; well, it will be a miracle if they ever make it up this side the grave. Worldly people have their quarrels, make them up and forget them; good people, never. I have often marvelled at this strange fact, and do so still. But there it is. Let us watch the beginnings, for an after remedy comes too late. No matter what the injury inflicted on us, no matter how unjust the treatment, let us pray for the one who inflicted the injury, and praying for him, we shall still any rising of hatred; you cannot hate anyone for whom you pray.

Joy rejoices in possession. We are full of joy when we welcome home one dearly loved after long years of separation. Joy fills our heart, because he is with us again; yet every joy here below is dashed with the fear of loss. Only in Heaven can our joy be truly full. Our true joy consists in the possession of God, and this joy fills the soul with gladness exceeding all expression, even here on earth.

Joy springs from possession, *Sorrow* arises from loss, from the absence of the one whom we love. The separation from those loved always brings a sorrow proportionate to our love. There is sorrow, too, at our imperfections, at our ungenerous nature, our self-love, and want of fervour for Our Lord Who lavished such love upon us. This is a fruitful sorrow, if it leads us to action; unless the sorrow brings forth fruit, it is useless. Joy and sorrow, tears and laughter are near neighbours. Extreme joy and extreme sorrow both produce tears; how often we see the smile, even through the tears. Life, of necessity, must be shadowed with sorrow, because made up of separations. Seas and lands sever those who love, death divides those who love, and there is sorrow, because they are no longer with us and we with them. Some are so

stricken and crushed with sorrow that they can never look up: the light has gone out of their eyes and they give themselves over to inordinate grief. We must not sorrow beyond measure, even over our past sins and failures. He has forgiven and forgotten, and we, forgetting those things that are behind, must press on to those that are before.

How great a thing is *Hope,* which cheers and encourages, inspires and helps, amidst the darkest hours and most unutterable disappointments of life; "hoping," as the Apostle says, "against hope." How wonderful the confident hope in the final issue shone out in France; even in the gloomiest days men were sure we should "win through." After all the horror of the great retreat in March, 1918, a man remarked to me: "Well, Father, it's been a bit of a mix-up, ain't it?" That was all. In the dark hour of fierce savage struggle and battle with the powers of darkness, when the blackness of night envelopes the soul, she must never fail or falter in her hope and confidence that her Lord will "see her through," sure that, as He is for her, none can stand against her. If Hope lifts up the soul and supports her in her most impossible situations, *Despair* casts down and paralyses all her faculties. Once despair enters, then the soul is rendered helpless indeed. An army given up to despair, is already beaten before the fight begins. Some souls have a ceaseless battle all the days of their life against this insidious passion. The Devil uses it with such effect, he paints all their failures in such intense shadows and causes even their good to appear ill, striving to persuade them that they will surely fail at the last.

Desire is a restless faculty of the soul: no sooner has one desire been satisfied than another takes its place, in endless succession through all the days of life. Desire is always directed to the attainment of something beyond us. Once it is attained, desire reaches forward to something else. This is true both in the natural and supernatural order.

Aversion arises from the wish to avoid the threatening evil and to escape it, just as Desire is the wish to attain the good and possess it.

The way to the mortification of this passion is to go

forward and embrace the thing that is feared, whether it be temporal or spiritual suffering. Once we determine resolutely to endure the pain or cross that threatens, half its terrors disappear.

Lastly there comes *Anger,* arising from some opposition to that which the will desires. The miserable state to which this passion can reduce the soul we see only too often in the case of those who, immediately they are crossed in the slightest thing, break out into ungovernable passion, regardless of every sense of propriety, of the company they are in, or the place in which they happen to be. In extreme cases the persons so affected become temporarily insane and utterly irresponsible, only returning to sanity when the passion has spent its force.

We have to mortify this passion, first by exterior restraint, so that we do not permit any outward sign of the emotion within. This is the first step. Then we have to mortify the passion within, until finally, no matter what the provocation may be, there is no disturbance within or without. Make no mistake: if after a terrific struggle we crush down the rising passion within and suffer no indication to appear without, we have already done much. We must not listen to those who say: "I am no hypocrite. I don't pretend to be what I am not," as an excuse for the uncontrolled manifestation of their anger. No: there is no hypocrisy. When with great difficulty we have held ourselves in during a trying situation, it is a triumph over the flesh and will lead us to the final victory over the spirit.

Now we have some idea of the way in which flesh and spirit have to be controlled and disciplined by this practice of mortification. "I die daily," says the Apostle: and so our life must be a daily dying to ourselves, if we would live to God. This unceasing mortification of every sense, power and passion of the soul will bring peace, liberty of spirit and perfect union at last, although the soul has yet to pass through the night of purgation of sense and spirit before that union is attained, a night in which she dies a mystical death and begins her true mystical life.

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CHAPTER XI

THE NIGHT OF SENSITIVE PURGATION, ACTIVE AND PASSIVE

Before we describe the experience of the soul, in the night of sensitive purgation, we must look a little at the state at which she has arrived before entering it.

She has already turned herself to God and forsaken the pleasures of the world, with all its varied delights; she has found in prayer a sweetness and joy of which she had no experience while she was absorbed in the things of sense; she rejoices in fasting and corporal mortifications and the solemn offices of the Church. The life-giving Grace flowing to her from the Sacraments quickens her with the pulsation of the new life of the spiritual world into which she has entered. How different her state now is to that before her conversion is brought home to her, when some object that formerly excited her to delight and pleasure no longer stirs her even to passing interest. She is a new creature and that life lived according to the flesh has passed away, and it may be in truth said of her that all things have become new.

This sensible sweetness which she finds will always make the first days of her conversion a peculiarly precious memory. It is only the dawning of the spirit-life: but the dawn has a beauty all its own, as the sun appears over the hills and disperses the clouds and darkness of night. And it is so with the soul, when God, in His gracious loving-kindness, bestows on her, but newly-weaned from the delights of the world and the flesh, a special sensible devotion, so that the things she has forsaken are felt to be of no worth, compared with this experimental tasting of the goods of the supernatural life.

But the soul in this state is yet very far from perfection and full of defects of which she is not yet conscious; the

clear light of God's Grace has not yet shone in with morning splendour and manifested their presence to her.

Nevertheless, between her former state, when she had her gaze fixed upon created things and found all her pleasure and satisfaction in them, and her present condition, there is a great gulf fixed. Now she has her gaze turned to God and finds her pleasure and her satisfaction in Him, she speaks a new language to that she spoke before; "the natural and sensual man understandeth not the things of God, they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand, because they are spiritually discerned."

Now she has begun this new life, she speaks the new language of her spiritual state.

The defects that are inevitable in beginners manifest themselves in the soul in this first stage of her dawning spirit-life. She is too much set on the sweetness of sensible devotion, too attached to the tangible spiritual emotion, critical of others and over hasty and impetuous when she sees them as yet unawakened to the value of the things of the spirit, forgetful that such was her own condition only a brief while before.[1]

This want of humility—for such it is—tends to a certain narrowness of view, so that the soul is impatient of all who do not follow her exactly in her way. She is too ready to discuss her state and experience with others and place over-much importance on mere outward practices of devotion.

Alternately she makes too little of her faults or too much, and gives way to impatience, when she sees how easily she falls into them.[2]

The soul has to watch vigilantly at this time against over-great eagerness for sensible devotion, and undue attachment to the mere outside of the spiritual life. She must strive to withdraw herself from any resting in outward shewing of devotion, directing herself to God alone.

St. John of the Cross is very explicit in his warning of the dangers that arise from spiritual luxury: "Some, too, form spiritual friendships with others, the source of which is

[1] Dark Night of the Soul, Bk. I., cap. ii., § 1.
[2] ib., Bk. I., cap. ii., § 5.

luxury, and not spirituality. We may know it to be so by observing whether the remembrance of that affection increases our recollection and love of God, or brings remorse of conscience. When this affection is purely spiritual, the love of God grows with it, and the more we think of it the more we think of God and the greater our longing for Him; for the one grows with the other. The Spirit of God has this property, that it increases good by good, because there is a likeness and conformity between them. But when this affection springs out of the vice of sensuality, its effects are quite opposite; for the more it grows, the more is the love of God diminished, and the remembrance of Him also: for if this earthly love grows, that of God cools down. . . On the other hand, if the love of God grows in the soul, the human love cools and is forgotten."[1]

The soul in this state is often awkward and angular in her movements; angry and censorious of the faults of others and impatiently eager to set them right, then angry with herself, as she sees her own shortcomings and failings, and again, in moments when the spiritual sweetness to whch she has become accustomed is wanting, there is a sharpness and irritation of manner, that seem strangely at variance with her state. This is all to be expected; the soul cannot escape these defects in a moment, but only through long-continued penance and self-effacement.[2]

Another danger arises from the soul over-estimating the importance of the spiritual sweetness of devotion, and too eagerly seeking it, desiring rather the consolations of God than the God of consolations.

This clinging to sensible sweetness is so strong, that the soul imagines that unless she enjoys it, her prayer can be of no value at all: she has yet to learn that true devotion consists only in the total conformity of her will to her Lord, so that she embraces with joy, sweetness or dryness, whichever He sends, because it is His gift and will for her.

[1] Dark Night of the Soul, Bk. I., cap. iv., § 9.
[2] ib., Bk. I., cap. v.

She is inclined to attempt indiscreet penances and mortifications, without the consent of her director, or at least obtain his assent by her importunate entreaty. She has not yet learned the supreme importance of absolute surrender, that penance of her own will which is so essential for her progress.[1]

Again, she is envious and questioning when she sees the graces God has granted to others, inclined to depreciate them, especially of they are led in a different way to her own.[2]

When God begins to withdraw this morning sweetness from the soul, she is met with one great peril, the temptation to slacken in her devotion; not finding the consolation she has hitherto enjoyed, she is inclined to grow weary and abandon the attempt to tread the interior way altogether.

She is very far from that total abandonment to the Divine Will which is her essential perfection; too often she desires to draw God to her will, rather than conform hers to His. She conceives some design which she believes is for His glory, and in effect says to Him: "You must do this, you see it is for your glory," without that ready and entire abandonment of her project to His good pleasure which is so essential to her. She is ever expecting God to will the thing she desires.

Such is the state of the soul, when she stands on the threshold of that dark night of purgation in which all her senses are to be purified and harmonised with the spirit.

This night is one in which all the senses are withdrawn from the beholding of outward things, for, says St. John of the Cross: "If the impressions and communications of sense be rejected and denied, we may well say that the soul is in darkness and empty. . . It is true, indeed, that we cannot help hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, and touching, but this is of no moment, and does not trouble the soul, when the objects of sense are repelled, any more than if we neither heard nor saw."[3] It does not mean that the soul, in this state, stays the natural action of the senses, but that she withdraws within herself,

[1] The Dark Night of the Soul, Bk. I., cap. vi.
[2] ib., Bk. I., cap. vii.
[3] Ascent of Mount Carmel, Bk. I., cap. iii., § 3.

heeds them not, like one immersed in a book hears the sounds of the voice, but apprehends not their meaning when they strike the ear.

The beginning then, of this night, is the abandonment of all sensual desire in outward things, the pleasures of the flesh and the satisfaction of the will.

This closing, so to speak, of the five windows of the soul by which she beholds things without, naturally puts her in darkness, since she no longer derives any satisfaction through them. It is not that, in the external duties of her state and in their fulfilment, these five senses are not employed, that would be impossible; but the soul no longer uses these windows to look out and seek her pleasure through them. When an observer was sent up the line to watch the enemy, he would be instructed to look for any sign of movement along some particular road, otherwise the enemy's movements would not attract attention, although they might be seen with the eyes.

During the night the soul sees things, but she pays no attention.

She must go further still, and arrest all the desires of the soul within, for it would be of small use to shut the windows if she is filled with desires inside. The desires are ever painting pictures in the imagination, and as the desires are ever changing and never satisfied, this night of purgation has to bring the soul to that state in which all her desires have been laid to rest.

And it is this stilling of all desire that makes the night so dark; having closed the outer windows, the soul has now to empty herself within from every desire and image of created things, that she may attend to her Love alone.

The soul not only detaches herself from all created things, but from all desire of them; it is not a question of their mere absence; if she still desired them, the soul would be still attached to them. A soul may possess things and yet be entirely detached from them, while another is deeply attached to them without possessing them, through her desire to have them.

This emptying of the soul is necessary, in order that her Lord and Bridegroom may come and fill her with His own glorious presence.

Now the soul can only leave her love of creatures when this is replaced by the greater love of the Creator. Divine Love alone can enable the soul to forsake earthly love and affections, for the love of the less can only be overcome by the love of the greater.

How strong is the attraction of the soul to creatures, even in the fervour of her first conversion, when she is being drawn away from them by God's love acting upon her with all its supernatural power: and unless it was so, the soul could never get free from the attracting power of outward things.

Creatures compared with God are as nothing; if the soul desires creatures at the same time that she desires God, she seeks the impossible. It is impossible for God and creatures to occupy her heart at the same time: "I am He that is, thou art she that is not," said God to St. Catherine of Siena, when He showed her the nothingness of the creature compared with Himself.

Our heart is so constituted that it magnifies the object on which it is set, above others, that are really greater. So when the creature fills the heart the vision of the Creator is dimmed.

The mortification of the desires of the soul is of supreme importance, if she is to enter this night of purgation, and proceed through it to that union and transformation into God for which she has been made.

These desires of the soul have a two-fold effect, as St. John of the Cross says: "they both deprive her of God, and then they weary, torment, overcloud, defile and weaken her."[1]

The desires are restless and never satisfied: no sooner have they obtained one thing, than they ask for another. The soul is never at rest, the desires ever reach forward to grasp that to which they tend, and when they have obtained it, stretch out again after something else.

We see how the soul is tormented by these never-ceasing desires; for when they are very intense and vehement they produce pain and anguish within her.

They overcloud and darken her; the heart turned to the creature is really blinded, in an altogether extraordinary

[1] Ascent of Mount Carmel, Bk. I., cap. vi., § 1.

way, to the loss she suffers. And these desires defile the soul; the intellect is filled with conceptions of the things of time, and the imagination is filled with pictures and disfigured and stained by them.

The will requires all its strength for the attainment of an end. Dissipation means weakness. Therefore in so far as the soul turns to creature, she is hampered in her real work of giving all to God.

Desires are manifold: they vary from those grievously sinful to those only venial, and again, to those that are merely imperfections; all in their various degrees hold back the soul from God. Even spiritual and good desires have often to be suppressed, because they distract the soul and hinder her in her advance towards Divine Union. Of course it is always understood that by desires we mean those that are voluntarily consented to by the soul. It is not within our power to restrain the first involuntary movement of desire; it is when the soul freely consents to these desires, with the will of satisfying them, that sins or imperfection come in. The involuntary desires or imaginations no more affect the soul than outward things through the five senses, when she pays no heed to them. It is the voluntary attention of the soul to them that must be arrested, as Walter Hylton says: "If thou feedest thy soul willingly and wittingly by imaginations of vanities of the world, and desiring of worldly things; as a comfort, or pleasure, or ease; verily though thy soul be kept within as to thy bodily senses, it is notwithstanding far without by such vain imaginations."[1]

The way of the soul is to root out entirely all desires save one, "That God's Holy Will may be utterly and entirely done in her"; with all desires banished, she must wait in the attitude of loving attention on her Lord. One desire cherished, however small, is sufficient to hinder the soul from union with God, because this union consists in the transformation of her will into His, in such wise that every movement of hers becomes that of His. From which it is evident that for the soul to cleave to anything, however small, to desire anything, however trifling, save

[1] The Scale of Perfection, Bk. I., pt. iii., cap. 10.

Him alone, is to place a barrier to His designs within her.

She must be entirely detached from even the smallest inclination to creatures, if she is to possess the divine freedom.

The soul that keeps back part of the price, even though that part be only one insignificant trifle, a certain natural affection, a liking for a particular book or room, or the satisfaction of one's taste in things in themselves good, can never attain unity till she gives the whole.

All this is impossible for the soul, since of herself she can do nothing; but with the Holy Ghost within her she can do all things, even that most difficult task of all, the stilling of all her desires, the bringing of every thought into captivity to the Cross of Christ.

When the soul enters on this night, the sensible sweetness she has hitherto enjoyed in prayer and the unction she has experienced in her spirit-life is all dried up; there is no consolation now, but a desolate aridity; do what she may, the soul cannot find anything save this sense of utter desolation, in which she finds no comfort in the things of God, and none in created things.

In this darkness and dryness of spirit she never feels any inclination to turn from spiritual things and seek consolation in temporal: indeed she is quite unable to do so. With this strange incapacity to find satisfaction in the things of earth or heaven, she is overwhelmed with dread that she is not pleasing to God, although she can perceive no new fault and no new reason for her condition. Her desire of God is stronger and more ardent than it was in the moments of her former sensible devotion, and her fear of having offended Him is greater.

Then again, she finds herself unable to meditate, that is to make discursive prayer: she cannot make use of memory, nor make any collected reflections. God is beginning now to communicate Himself in a new way, that of the pure spirit through mystical Contemplation, which is not a devout reasoning about Him, but a loving beholding of Him, a looking at Him with the eyes of the spirit.

This dark night of Purgation produces in the soul a true self-knowledge: for by the withdrawal of all sensible

sweetness in the closing of her outward windows and in the emptying of her will of all desire, she comes for the first time to a full realization of her own misery.

She is no longer critical and fault-finding with others, she perceives too well her utter worthlessness to set herself above anyone, rather she esteems herself as less than the least of all.

She becomes less attached to the outward things of the spiritual life, and depends little, if at all, upon them for help. She is far less self-confident in her prayer: she does not press and insist on that which she conceives to be for God's glory, but willingly abandons herself to His good pleasure, reducing everything to this, that she only desires that which appears to be for His glory, if it is in truth what it seems.

Her prayer is less vehement and more humble: she sees her own defects and angularities with a clearness unknown before, and her unworthiness of the least of His mercies; in the grace of this humility she loves and esteems others, despises herself, and on the sure foundation of her self-knowledge, she comes to the knowledge of God: "Teach me to know myself and I shall know Thee."

This state of darkness and aridity brings with it the beginning of that liberty of the children of the Kingdom which God bestows on the soul, when she has forsaken all attachment to things without and all desires of the will within. She is at liberty, because no longer held by pleasurable delight without, and liberated from the tyranny of desires within; she is no longer attached to the sensible delights and sweetnesses of spiritual devotion, having left them all aside, that in the light of pure faith she may cleave to God and seek only His Pleasure.

This night has fierce temptations, far more terrifying and intense than the soul has experienced before. The blasphemies of the Evil Spirit approach so close that the soul imagines they are her own utterances, so vividly are they impressed upon her, and she is stricken with horror at the words that appear to come from her own heart and even her own lips; or, again, she often suffers the most

savage temptations to sins of impurity and lust that return again and again with seemingly resistless force. The will seems helpless before their cruel onset, and the soul, filled with these fearfully vivid imaginations and representations, is in terror and dread lest she has consented to them; perhaps there is no horror in the night of sense that can quite compare with this.

She is distressed by all sorts of doubts and scruples; no sooner receives the assurance that she is in the right way than another doubt arises, more distressing than the last: so that she is always fearing she has not been understood, that somehow something has been omitted that was vital to explain her condition; she is filled with a thousand groundless fears, so that she distrusts both her own judgment and that of her guide; and when at length she enjoys some tranquility of soul, after a brief space, the peace is broken by some fresh fear or anxiety.

But through it all, God is doing His own work in His own way. The night may be long or it may be short: this depends on the soul's progress and on the completeness with which she abandons herself into God's hands, and opposes no resistance to His designs. This is her principal work in this night, to abandon herself without reserve, and lie passive in the Divine Hands, with no will of her own save the desire that God's work may be accomplished in her in the way and by what means it pleases Him to do it.

CHAPTER XII

THE NIGHT OF SPIRIT-PURGATION, PASSIVE AND ACTIVE

We have traced briefly the path of the soul through that active purgation of the senses, and also touched on that passive purgation in which God is acting alone on the soul, while she remains passive and unresisting in His hands. Of course, all the work, even in the active purgation, is wholly His, since she could do nothing on her part to co-operate with Him, unless He quickened her by His Grace to do so.

The length of this purgation depends wholly on the Divine pleasure; the active and passive purgations may merge, as they often do, into each other, there may be moments of wonderful spiritual refreshment in the darkness, more wonderful than any she has experienced before, because more spiritual and not, as before, originating in the sensitive part of the soul.

Through this purgation she may come to taste something of the joys of the spirit-life, or she may proceed directly into that dark night of spirit-purgation which surpasses in its intensity of suffering anything she has known before. And the senses suffer too, because their full and final purification can only take place when the spirit has been finally purged of all that hinders her perfect union with her Lord.

This night, says St. John of the Cross: "Is a certain inflowing of God into the soul, which cleanses her of her ignorances and imperfections, habitual, natural and spiritual . . It is called by Mystics Infused Contemplation or Mystical Theology, by which God secretly teaches the soul and

instructs her in the perfection of love, without effort on her own part, beyond loving attention to God, listening to His Voice and admitting the light He sends, but without understanding how this is infused contemplation." [1]

This purgation is as night; just as the sun shining in his strength, when beheld by the eyes, produces darkness, because the strength of his shining overcomes the power of their receptivity and all becomes blackness; so also the soul, when the Divine Light of Contemplation shines within her, is plunged in darkness, because that light so far surpasses all her power of perception that she is blinded by It.[2]

In this night she must detach herself not only from all creatures and all sensible sweetness and consolation, but also from all spiritual satisfaction, and cling to God by a bare living Faith alone. It is by Faith alone that we know God: "Without Faith no man can see God." And Faith is night to the soul, because Faith depends not on observation but on the assent of the soul to that which comes by hearing.

"Among all created things of which the understanding takes cognisance, there is nothing which can serve as a ladder whereby it may ascend unto God, Who is so high . . . the understanding if rightly disposed for the Divine union must then be pure and empty of all sensible objects, disengaged from all clear, intellectual perceptions, inwardly tranquil and still, resting on Faith; for Faith is the sole proximate and proportionate means of the soul's union with God, seeing there is no other alternative, but that God is either seen, or believed in . . . and thus by this means alone, that is, Faith, God manifests Himself to the soul in the Divine light which surpasses all understanding." [3]

The soul has to direct her way to God alone, leaving aside all sensible sweetness of devotion, and all spiritual manifestations, whether they come under the form of sensible representations, perceivable by eye, ear, or imagination, or are purely spiritual apprehensions in the soul. These are the highest and most perfect of all, they

[1] The Dark Night of the Soul, Bk. II., cap. v., § 2.
[2] The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Book II., cap iii., § i.
[3] ib., Book II., cap. viii., ad fin. and ix.

are the communications of God to the soul, but they are not Himself, and she is to rest only when she has become one with Him. Moreover, the Devil may simulate all these manifestations and use them to delude, or at least hinder and mislead her. For this reason, she is not only not to desire or seek such manifestations, but to resist them with all her strength, since if they are from Him her resistance will be vain, whereas if they come from the enemy, she will by her resistance overcome him.

Walter Hylton says : "The second sort of Contemplation may be termed a burning love in devotion, and is the lower." This other part is "a burning love in Contemplation, and is the higher. That is sweeter to the bodily feeling, this to the spiritual feeling inwardly, and is more worthy, more spiritual, more wonderful. . . This is the enlightening of the understanding in delights of loving, whereof David saith : 'My night is my light in my delight.' . . . To the perfection of this high contemplation may no man come till he be first reformed in soul to the likeness of Jesus in the perfection of virtues." [1]

"By this you may somewhat understand that visions, or revelations, or any manner of spirit appearing in bodily shape, or in imagining . . . or any other feeling . . . made as it were spiritually . . . though it be never so comfortable and liking, yet be they not very contemplation, but . . . secondary . . . in respect . . . of this spiritual knowing and loving of God accompanying true contemplation. . . . All such manner of feeling . . . may be wrought by a wicked angel when he transforms himself into an angel of light. Wherefore since they may be both good and evil, it appeareth they are not the best." [2]

"Hereby you may learn, that you are not to suffer your heart willingly to rest nor to delight wholly in any such bodily feelings of such manner of comforts and sweetness, though they were good ; but rather hold them in your sight naught, or little in comparison of spiritual desire and stedfast thinking on Jesus ; nor shall you fasten the thought of your heart over much on them." [3]

[1] The Scale of Perfection, Pt. I., cap. 9.
[2] ib., Pt. I., cap. 10.
[3] ib., Pt. I., cap. 11.

The soul, in this bare night of Faith, must mount above all the gifts, above all consolations sensible and spiritual, above all imaginations and all possible conceptions, to God His very Self. No conception her intellect forms, no picture her imagination paints, since it must be framed on some comparison of created things, can give any adequate conception of Him; so in order that she may reach Him, she has to abandon and empty herself of every form, figure and imagination, that, all these being removed by the way of bare Faith alone, she may come to apprehend Him.

The memory must be so completely emptied of all that it has drawn in from without, through the five bodily senses, that it shall be as if they had never entered it. When the memory is lifted up into God by divine union, and every form and fancy of knowledge are removed from it, the soul remains with her imaginary powers suspended, and without perception of the passage of time, or of what is passing round her, because of this union of her memory with God. During these experiences, which are never of great duration, the memory remains heedless of the happenings around her, without reflection, oblivious of time and filled with the presence of God, in a way she cannot describe; but even outside these moments of intense union between her spirit and God, she has to practise a continual mortification of the memory, not suffering any impressions conveyed to remain, and striving always to keep it empty and void that it may offer no resistance to the Divine operations. By this continual mortification, as St. John of the Cross points out,[1] she avoids three evils, of which the first comes from the world. The knowledge that enters her memory this way is often inaccurate, imperfect, gives rise to mistaken judgments, and draws the soul into a multitude of cares and interests which are of no importance to her either way. She will not be called upon at the Judgment Day to say what she had learned, known and thought of events around her; they only fill her with disturbing images and put a barrier in the way of her spiritual advancement. Of course I do not speak of those things she must know to fulfil the

[1] The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Bk. III., cap. ii., iii., iv.

duties of her state, but of those things that she is in no wise obliged to know.

The second is, that the Devil uses the memory and crowds it with all sorts of imaginations. This troubles the soul, involves her in many dangers by exciting pride, anger, and criticism, according to the objects set before her. If she resolutely puts everything out of her memory, the Devil has nothing on which he can lay hold and use to deceive her.

Suppose she has suffered some great injustice or injury, let her blot it out from her memory, as if it had never been. If she remembers it, the Devil will use it to excite her to dislike or hatred of the one who inflicted it, whereas if it is altogether removed, he cannot use it.

The third evil is the disturbance and distraction of soul, that arises from the images stored in the memory.

Directly the mind dwells in memory on anything, it is distracted according to the degree of affection or aversion it has for the thing before it. If the memory presents something pleasant the soul will be stirred to joy, if something unpleasant, it will be moved to sorrow; in either case interior tranquillity will be disturbed, and as the soul can only apply herself to one thing at a time, the intrusion of these memories occupies her, and so arrests her progress in the spirit-life.

If the soul then, will dwell in peace, it must be by emptying both memory and imagination of the images and apprehensions which fill them; they inevitably disturb her and fill her with useless disquiet. The dwelling on some misfortune or injury does nothing to change it, only adding sorrow to sorrow, and reproducing the original pain again. The soul desirous of receiving the Divine impress must be freed of all these disturbing emotions and images, so that, there being nothing within her to oppose His entrance, she may receive her Lord with joy.

So far, we have looked at the soul in the active night, and the way in which she may co-operate with the Divine Worker in His operations. There comes a time when He alone is the Worker, and the soul must rest passive in His hands, for Him to work His will in her.

The soul, in this passive night of the spirit, is stricken

with the terrible thought, persistent and of fearful intensity, that she is cast off and abandoned by God for ever, that she shall never see the Face of Him Who is the one sole desire of her life.

In her memory she suffers inconceivable agony, for, look where she will, she only sees sin ; she seems never to have responded aright to His Grace, her every thought and desire appears to be tainted, she is so crushed and overwhelmed in the thick darkness of this awful night, that she sees the Divine Face turned away from her, or reads upon it only the stern sentence of her rejection. So unutterably terrible is the anguish, and so awful the darkness that I have wondered how the brain has kept its balance under this awful strain, or indeed, that soul and body have kept united. "At least," cried one in this dreadful night, "at least He cannot stop my loving Him in this world!" The poor heart, burning with love, loving with an ardour never experienced before, growing the stronger as the certitude of final and utter rejection pressed itself upon her, only uttered its cry of love with stronger and more touching fervour.

Who can find words to describe the horror of this thick darkness that may be felt, when the soul in her intellect finds only darkness? She cannot pray; she strives for spirit-utterance, and seems held as in a vice, so that no touch of sweetness and no ray of light comes to relieve the inexpressible misery of her complete dereliction. And yet, strange as it may seem, her love never falters or varies ; through the darkness the soul strives to reach upwards to Him, hidden as He is from her in this blackness of darkness, which appears to her only the foretaste of the blacker darkness that is yet to be.

Her will seems paralysed and helpless in the midst of this terrible conflict, and yet it is in truth gaining a strength never possessed before, and she is growing into a love previously unknown, a love disinterested, stripped of all things. She loves Him now for Himself alone : she has ascended above all His gifts to the Divine Giver ; she is emptied of aught that could give her any consolation, she has reached that state in which He Himself alone can console and satisfy her ; His consolations, if given now,

would never satisfy the burning fire of love kindled within her, which will never find satisfaction save in the Divine union with her Love Himself.

In proportion as the soul realises God's greatness and majesty, she knows her own misery : it is the Divine Light shining upon her that brings the horror of this darkness, because this light, so strong and overwhelming, plunges the soul in darkness by its brightness.

Of herself she can only conceive the most intense horror. How can He, with His choirs of angels and His hosts of saints, rendering Him ever the most perfect service, vouchsafe even to regard her? She sees her own want of every good in clearest light; every small trifle, every defect of intention and will, every imperfection is magnified ; she sees nothing but sin. And with this contempt of herself comes a wonderful esteem of others, their virtues, their service. She is critical of none save herself. All serve God better than she, and how can she hope for His favour when He has all these to hasten to do His slightest bidding? "I am cast away from the sight of Thy eyes." This is the terrifying reflection that grows so intense that it blots out all else. His mighty love, His wonderful mercy, His life-giving Passion, instead of bringing comfort, only increase the agony, only make her final banishment more sure. The very thought of His Sacrifice and all His matchless love, only causes a greater feeling of unutterable unworthiness of the very least of His mercies, so that His very love itself only presses the soul with a new pain and more torturing anguish. But He loves her all the while.

To St. Angela of Foligno our Lord spoke these words, when she was experiencing this darkness of desolation : "When it seemeth unto thee thou art most forsaken, then thou art the more beloved and the nearer unto God."

Another time when she was thus troubled, so that it seemed unto her that she was forsaken, a voice spoke unto her and said : "O Beloved, know that thou art not forsaken, but in tribulation God the Almighty is nearer unto thee and thou unto God."

This thick darkness is broken through, and occasionally there falls upon her soul the white light of His presence

and the piercing sweetness of His love, compared to which all her previous experience is as nothing: and sometimes the soul loses all conscious use of her senses till it is overpast.

In this night the soul derives little or no comfort from the advice given her by her spiritual guide; she cannot believe him, enveloped as she is in the cloud of this utter darkness and desolation. She fears either that he has not understood her, or that she has not manifested her state as clearly as she ought; if she had, he would have acted in a different way; indeed often the comfort he offers is only a source of fresh pain. She goes morning by morning to receive her Lord, only under obedience. Every spiritual perception being dried up within her and swallowed up in the anguish of utter aridity and darkness, she feels she is only inflicting a new injury on Him she loves so intensely, every time she approaches to receive Him.

But He is infusing extraordinary strength to act, all unknown to her; it is only this infused strength that enables her to go on, for without it she would utterly fail. But although it is there and she is using it, yet the way in which she is walking is so new and strange to her that she does not recognise it. God Himself is acting now; all the faculties of the soul are reduced to absolute quiescence; He is working in her to transform her wholly unto Himself, taking away everything on which she may rest for support, renewing her will and uniting it to His in such manner that its operation may become wholly Divine.

Love grows during this fierce trial with marvellous rapidity, because all the things that tended to disturb the imagination and draw the will towards them are taken away by this total voiding of the powers; hence there is no obstacle to the growth of love towards the one object of her love.

St. John of the Cross pictures very vividly this mode of Divine action on the soul: "This purgative and loving knowledge, or Divine Light, is to the soul which it is purifying, in order to unite it perfectly to itself, as fire is to fuel which it is transforming into itself. The first action of material fire on fuel is to dry it, to expel from it all water and all moisture. It blackens it at once and soils it, and drying

it little by little, makes it light and consumes all its foulness and blackness which are contrary to itself. Finally, having heated and set on fire its outward surface, it transforms the whole into itself, and makes it beautiful as itself. The fuel under these conditions of fire, retains neither active nor passive qualities of its own, except bulk and weight, and assumes all the properties and acts of fire. . . . In this way the Divine fire of contemplative love, before it unites with, and transforms the soul into, itself, purges away all its contrary qualities. It expels its impurities, blackens it and obscures it, and thus its condition is apparently worse than it was before. For while the Divine purgation is removing all the evil and vicious humours which, because so deeply rooted and settled in the soul, were neither seen nor felt, but now in order that they may be annihilated and expelled are rendered clearly visible in the dim Light of the Divine Contemplation, the soul—though not worse in herself, nor in the sight of God—seeing at last what she never saw before, looks upon herself not only as unworthy of the Divine regard, but as a loathsome object in the eyes of God."[1]

In the first place we see how that very light, and that loving knowledge which unites the soul and transforms her into itself, is the same which purifies and prepares her; for the fire that transforms the fuel and incorporates it with itself, is the self-same, which also at first prepared it for that end. In the second place, the suffering of the soul does not proceed from the Divine Wisdom, but from her own imperfection, from her incapacity previous to her purgation, of receiving this Divine Light, sweetness and delight, and that is the reason why her sufferings are so great. So the fuel, too, is not transformed into fire at the instant of their contact, if it be not previously prepared for burning.

Through this fearful night the soul comes to attain her end, union with her Lord: this night may be long, it may lift and fall again and again. For, as I have said, God, in His loving-kindness measures both the strength of the soul in this terrific purgation, and the weight of suffering she is able to bear, and gives periods of light and peace in

[1] The Dark Night of the Soul, Bk. II., cap. x., § 2.

which she may believe that all the darkness is finally past, and yet it may return and her sufferings be renewed with greater intensity than before, because, as long as anything yet remains in the soul opposed to the Divine Union, she must suffer.

But the soul has nothing to do in this state save to be still: "Be still and you shall see the salvation of God." So many want to be always doing, and think, unless they are doing, that nothing is happening. Now the time has come to be still and rest passive in the Divine Hands; and that the soul finds very hard. Just as a strong person who has never known sickness, suddenly stricken by illness, wants to get up and walk about when he must lie down, so it is with the soul; she cannot understand what is happening and why her condition is so changed. She is unable to act in the way to which she has been accustomed; she turns this way and that and finds only desolation; she looks for light and finds none. The soul has got rid of all her external attachments; she has broken with all earthly affections, and given up her cleaving even to spiritual consolation. But there is much yet to do before she is ready for Divine Union. God is doing this work Himself and taking away from her everything that may mar the completeness of that union. She is now to be finally detached from herself, to lose everything, in which in any way she may rest. Just as when the Apostles came out of the cloud they saw "Jesus only," so when the soul comes out of the night of this final purgation, she will find "God alone," and with this shewing of God alone she finds her peace in full and abundant measure, since everything that could any way disturb that peace has vanished away. She cleaves to naught here below; she abandons the past; she abandons the present; she abandons the future; and rests in the good pleasure of her Love alone. His pleasure is her pleasure, His delight her delight, for she now beholds all things with His Eyes and wills all things with His will.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FIRST DEGREES OF CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

We come now to the more interior and mystical states of Prayer. As we look over this great Country of Mystical Prayer, we realise our need of a map to give us an idea of its configuration, and some map references by which we may take our bearings. The map was a very important article out in France and it was very necessary to know, at least in an elementary way, how to read it and how to find the map reference.

And we want a sort of spiritual map of this Country of Mystical Contemplation, and some references by which we may discover our position upon it.

Mystical Theology is largely experimental; that is to say, it is made up of the varied experiences of the soul in the things of the spirit, and it is by comparing one with another that the general lie of the country has been made out.

Of course there is a theoretical side also, but, generally speaking, Mystical Theology is based rather upon experimental knowledge of God than theoretical—it proceeds rather by induction than by *a priori* argument, and for this reason it is more appealing and convincing. The theoretical teaching that "fire burns" is brought home to the child more vividly by his experience of the truth, through actual contact with the flame, than by much theoretical explanation.

It is no wonder that when the soul tries to describe something of her experience in this interior way, she stammers and struggles to find words to express what she has seen and heard, very much as a child who has seen some wonderful sight searches in vain for some words to express it; it is so with all mystical writers, they are ever looking for words to express the inexpressible.

But the experiences of the soul must have some objective standard by which they may be measured and tested; this

standard and measure is supplied by the Dogmatic teaching of the Church; for, as St. John teaches, we must try the Spirits "whether they be of God or not." In like manner, all subjective experience must be tested by the Dogmatic measure; unless this external test existed, there would be no limit to the vagaries and extravagances of subjective experience, and truth might be confounded with falsehood and falsehood with truth, as happens every day to those who lay the soul open to the action of whatever spirit may play upon her, and, casting aside the sure guidance of the Divine Teacher, give themselves up to the indulgence of their subjective emotions.

Every experience, every revelation, every showing, however wonderful and satisfying it may appear, must be brought to the test of Dogmatic truth; if it conforms with this standard it may be accepted as true, and, however profound and wonderful, it must be unhesitatingly rejected if it does not. This is the teaching of all the great Mystical Masters of every age, and it affords a sure means of discerning the true manifestations of the Spirit of God from the clever counterfeit of the Spirit of Darkness.

In order the better to understand the operations of the Spirit and the character of these degrees of Contemplation which we shall consider, it is well to have in mind the double way in which God's Grace operates in the soul; the indwelling of habitual Grace which is permanent, and actual Graces which are transient favours. Most of the misunderstandings that have arisen around these various degrees of Contemplation have resulted from the confounding of transient graces with permanent, and of permanent Graces with those that are transient.

Of these degrees of prayer, *Recollection* and *Quiet* are permanent states; *Silence, Mystical Sleep, Intoxication of Love,* and *Spiritual Anguish,* are merely transient graces experienced in the before-mentioned permanent states of Contemplation.

Again, the prayer of Union and the final degree of Mystical Marriage are both permanent states, while Rapture and Ecstasy are both transient Graces, experienced during the state of Simple Union and even in the Prayer of Quiet.

After all, we must remember that these degrees of prayer

are not sharply marked divisions, but are a gradual growth, so that often the experiences of one state may seem to overlap into another; it is like the landscape, where hill and dale are not mere hard and fast lines, but a gradual merging of the one into the other. If we have this in mind, our understanding of the soul-experience in Contemplation will be much simplified.

The Prayer of *Recollection* marks the first stage of the soul's passage, along the Road that leads to Divine Union.

It is called Recollection, because God calls the faculties of the soul away from the beholding of external things, within herself; she becomes recollected instead of dissipated. Before, when she let herself look through the five windows of her senses on to exterior things, she drew in a multitude of distracting and disturbing images, but by this withdrawal within herself she forms for herself a solitude within. She is a true solitary who encloses herself within herself from all that is without. Solitude of soul is no mere material thing, since a mere shutting out of worldly things would be in vain if the imagination yet continued to busy itself with the images of them; then the soul would be as little recollected as if she still, with all her faculties, walked abroad beholding and seeing all the objects of sense in this transitory life.

Walter Hylton, in the opening chapter of the "Scale of Perfection" says: "as thou hast forsaken the world and turned to Our Lord bodily in sight of men, so thou be in thy heart as it were dead to all earthly loves and fears, and turned wholly to Our Lord Jesus Christ; for be thou well assured that a bodily turning to God without the heart following is but a figure and likeness of virtues, and not the truth in itself."

In like manner, wrote St. Catherine of Siena, to Raymond of Capua:

"You will be able to have the actual cell little, but I wish you to have the cell of the heart always, and always carry it with you. For as you know, while we are locked therein, enemies can do us no wrong. Then every act you shall do will be guided and ordered by God."

Solitude is formed within by the soul withdrawing and gathering together all her powers within herself, because

she has felt the attraction of the great reality. Her interest and concern in temporal things is dried up; she has no desire to go without to find her satisfaction, because God has become the one attraction and the one desire of her life. True, she still uses her faculties to perform her duties, whatever they be, of the state of life in which she is called, but while the faculties perceive all that is necessary in order that she may fulfil her duties, she does not look out of these windows, but her habitual state is one of withdrawal and recollection within.

The imagination with all its images is brought to rest, and the soul experiences a wonderful drawing to solitude, that she may be alone with her Lord. She is glad to be solitary and seeks to be right away from everything that may distract this interior recollection. Lovers always seek to be alone, and no matter how familiar and well-known the company in which they may be, they are not at ease, because they are sufficient for each other, and they find the old saying true, that two are company and three none. And the soul is just entering on this stage of Love. God is her Lover, and hence she desires to be alone with Him, and finds all things without only get in her way; so she gladly rids herself of them, that she may attend to her Love alone.

This state may be attained by active effort, aided of course by God's Grace, for every effort of the soul would be in vain without the aid of the Spirit of God; but it is also and more frequently attained passively, when God Himself acts upon the soul and she rests passive in His Hands. The difference between the two ways of attaining this recollection is, that while in the one case, helped by Grace, the soul strives to close her windows and recollect all her powers within herself, in the other God shuts them for her, gathers all her powers within her, and the work of recollection in this latter case is both more rapidly attained and more complete; all the things of time fall away and the soul retains neither lot nor interest in them.

The soul in this state of Recollection speaks to God without words; she speaks the language of the Spirit, which has no need of them for its expression.

She experiences an extraordinary overwhelming sense of God's Presence within her, yet there is no suspension of the

faculties, even when she enters for the first time into this interior Recollection, she experiences a great sense of wonder at the state on which she has entered, but remains conscious of all that is happening around her. The soul, persevering in this state of Recollection, advances onwards into the *Prayer of Quiet* in which she rests with complete and tranquil abandonment in God's Love, desiring nothing save that His Will may be entirely done in her; her peace increases, she is satisfied with His Love, and desires nothing else, except to continue and increase in it.

Just as the country gradually rises and ascends towards the hill, so does this Prayer of Quiet rise out of that first Prayer of Recollection.

Sometimes it is acquired by the active effort of the soul co-operating with Grace; more often it is passively infused directly by God. These are the two different ways in which God acts upon the soul. We cannot comprehend God's dealing with the soul or why He grants the grace of this prayer to some and denies it to others.. But we know that it is so. Like the man born blind, in the Gospel, after he had received his sight, the soul can only say: "Once I was blind, but now I see."

After all, the answer is found in the words of the Master: "Shall I not do what I will with my own." These Graces are His to give or His to withhold. "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Yet of this we may be sure, that faithful correspondence to Grace is always a disposing factor for more Grace, since we have the declaration of the Saviour Himself that: "to him that hath shall be given."

The soul may be disturbed without, and the tempest of temptation may rage around her, but this will not disturb the Quiet in the superior part of the soul. Many souls attain to this state of Interior Quiet; not many pass beyond it, because unready to travel the hard way of utter immolation and self-renunciation which further advance in the mystical way demands. They come, as it were, in sight of the promised land and yet never enter into it, because that complete crucifixion and death of their whole nature which must be accomplished before they rise to the new life of the spirit is too terrifying, and so they hold back and rest on the borders instead of entering, by way of full conformity

and total detachment, into the Blessed liberty of God's children and the possession of the land flowing with the fullness of spiritual delight that can only be theirs who have forsaken all to find the All. In these two permanent states the soul experiences other degrees of prayer that are really transient.

The Prayer of *Silence* may be experienced either while in the state of Recollection or of Quiet.

This is an intense drawing up of the soul into God and approaches near to Ecstasy, although there is no total suspension in the operation of the soul's powers (*i.e.*, she is still conscious as to where she is); but there is only a very vague notion as to anything happening around her; the passage of time is unnoticed. She is filled with a most overpowering sense of the Divine Presence, and to such a degree, that when this wonderful experience, which the soul finds herself utterly unable to describe in words, has passed, she exclaims: "There, I can never have a doubt again!" She seems to know, what before she believed, to have received a certitude of Divine Reality that transcends all reason.

God gives this experience anywhere; the soul may be occupied in some ordinary occupation, when God comes and takes her thus out of herself; or she may be at prayer, and in a moment she is rapt in Him, He is present there, with His Love and Light, holding her, lifting her up into this wonderful communion with Himself in which she becomes forgetful of all else in the joy of His Presence.

We may form some idea of this effect on the soul from the effect of some extraordinary sight in the natural order. Taking a lorry through Ypres one day the driver, fresh from England, was so astonished by the sight of the bursting of an 11-inch shell on the roadside that he pulled up the lorry to have a good look at the amazing sight—for a great shell bursting at close quarters *is* an amazing sight—not realising the danger, to the great discomfiture of the old heroes, who were riding on the lorry with him, and who had no desire for anything except to get as far as possible from the unwelcome visitor. It was the wonder of the sight that held him. It is so with the soul in this Prayer of Silence, when all her powers are held by the sight of

God. These transient Graces rarely exceed half an hour in duration, although occasionally they may continue somewhat longer; the soul would scarcely be able to endure a longer experience.

The second transient degree of Contemplation—called the *Intoxication of Divine Love*—is so named because the soul is so overcome by the inflow of Divine Grace that she becomes as if inebriated with wine and bereft of reason.

This wonderful manifestation of Love sometimes overflows from the spirit into the body, and its presence is manifested in different ways, in accordance with the different characteristics of the recipients. While Grace transforms nature, it does not change it, and every Grace is received according to the character of the receiver.

Some souls, naturally emotional, will manifest by external signs and words the greatness of the joy that fills them; unable to contain themselves in that inflow of God's Light and Love which they have received in the spirit, their sensitive nature gives outward expression to their inward feeling in rapturous utterance and transports of joy. This is the case more particularly with those less advanced in the spirit-life, because less restrained and controlled under the Divine influence than those who are more advanced in mystic ways.

Some souls are naturally restrained and rarely give way to any outward manifestation of their emotions. In them, these transports of Divine Love are experienced only in the soul, ravishing her out of herself with their overpowering sweetness, so that she is ready to sing for joy within herself, just as others, more emotional, utter their songs of joy and jubilation without, singing in spiritual canticles to the Lord. The more perfect manifestation is that which is experienced in the soul alone and does not overflow into sensitive nature, and therefore has no external manifestation.

But we cannot set bounds to the working of God's Grace, or lay down rules for Him, and in the presence of these manifestations of His Love and Power we can only admire His gracious working amongst the children of men.

These intense transports of Divine Love, whether experienced only in the soul, or outwardly manifested, are

of brief duration, although they may recur again and again, and are granted by God to strengthen and encourage the soul in the sufferings in the purgative way, through which she must pass to attain her complete purification.

The third transient degree of Contemplation is that of *Mystical Sleep,* during which all the powers of the soul remain suspended. In this sweet tranquillity the soul perceives nothing new, by which this degree of prayer is differentiated both from ecstasy and rapture. The soul simply rests in supreme confidence and trust in her Lord, neither seeing nor desiring anything, save to rest sweetly in Him. Although during this time she remains merely quiescent, yet when she returns to herself, she finds she is strengthened and her power of acting greatly increased. It gives that refreshment and strength to her in the spiritual order that sleep brings to her in the natural order. These suspensions of the soul's power, like those before mentioned, are never of great duration, rarely indeed exceeding half an hour, although in some few extraordinary cases they may be more prolonged.

These three degrees prepare the way for the fourth, the *Torment of Divine Love,* which immediately precedes the soul's passage into the life of simple union and in which the soul's longing for the Bridegroom is so intense that it becomes very torture to her. We have all experienced it more or less in the natural order, when one very dearly loved is returning after long absence. As the days draw nearer for his coming, we feel a growing pain at the heart, increasing as the days pass, until at length the day eagerly looked for comes at last, and with straining eyes we stand on the platform watching the incoming train, as it slowly —so very slowly, as it seems to us—approaches. The pain of these last moments is strangely yet sweetly piercing, beyond all that has gone before, because the very nearness of the one loved only makes the sense of separation the more intense.

And then, who shall describe the joy of possession?

But such a comparison is hopelessly inadequate and helplessly imperfect, and can only very feebly indeed convey any idea of the soul-experience, as the day of union draws near; its very nearness causes a piercing of the heart, so

sweet and yet so supremely painful, that unless these moments were shortened death would surely come. The soul is impatient to rush forward into the very embrace of God, and that it is delayed, and that the moment has not yet come, wounds her with a wound which only the possession of her God and her Love can heal.

St. John of the Cross thus describes it : " This pain is like dying ; it is as if the whole soul were festering because of its wound. It is dying a living death until love, having slain it, shall make it live the life of love, transforming it in love. This dying of love is effected by a single touch of the knowledge of the Divinity ; it is the ' I know not what ' ; of which the creatures are speaking indistinctly. This touch is not continuous, nor great—for then soul and body would part, but soon over, and thus the soul is dying of Love and dying the more when it sees that it cannot die of love.[1] . . . . . The wounds of love are so deliciously sweet, that if they do not kill, they cannot satisfy the soul. It says : as Thou art the cause of its pain in the affliction of love, be Thou also the cause of its health by a death from love ; so the heart, wounded by the pain of Thy absence, shall be healed in the delight and glory of Thy sweet presence."[2]

The soul stands now with this eager longing on the very verge of the life of union. But she must abandon all, that she may have the Bridegroom. God's price is everything, and if the smallest thing is held back the union cannot be accomplished ; she must be dead to everything save Him alone.

And running parallel with these experiences is the fierce purgation of the night of the spirit. What a paradox the spirit life is—" sorrowing, yet always rejoicing." The soul experiences light and darkness. There is an intoxication of sorrow as well as of joy. So these wonderful moments, as the soul stands in sight of the promised land and the possession of Love, are fraught with tremendous consequences ; because to possess, she must give so much ; not nine-tenths—as some want to give—but all. Her Lover is a very jealous lover, and He will be satisfied with nothing less than the whole.

[1] The Spiritual Canticle, Stanza vii., § 4.
[2] ib., Stanza ix., § 2.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LATER DEGREES OF CONTEMPLATION—SIMPLE UNION—ECSTASY—RAPTURE—SPIRITUAL MATRIMONY

All the previous experiences of the soul, all the graces of contemplative prayer already bestowed are but preparations for her union with her Lord. They all lead up, through the life of Simple Union and Betrothal, to the final consummation in that Mystical Marriage, the highest degree of union possible on earth, in which the soul possesses and sees God, not indeed with the full clear light of Eternity, but in a light between that of Faith and the Face-to-Face Vision : for in that degree of Contemplation there is a real seeing of God by the soul, which seeing exceeds all telling, for no words can describe it.

The soul, having passed through those final fierce purgations of Spirit in which her whole nature is purified and all her powers renewed and transformed by the Divine Action, arrives at the state of *Simple Union.*

This Union is wrought by Love, since Love alone makes it possible, and her will becomes one in operation with the Will of God. In this state she has no desire and no action of her own, since all her actions are wrought by God Himself : indeed, the state of union, and, in particular, the perfect union of Mystical Marriage, is spoken of by mystical writers as the Deification of the Creature.

Describing the soul's entry on the way of Simple Union, St. John of the Cross says : "The soul is now like a virgin betrothed and beholds herself growing into perfect love. The spiritual marriage of the soul and the Son of God now remains to be accomplished. This is, beyond all comparison, a far higher state than that of betrothal, because it is a complete transformation into the Beloved ; whereby they surrender each to the other the entire possession of themselves in the perfect union of love, wherein the soul becomes Divine,

and, by participation, God, so far as is possible in this life. I believe that no soul ever attains to this state, without being confirmed in grace, for the faithfulness of both is confirmed; that of God being confirmed in the soul. Hence it follows that this is the very highest state possible in this life."[1]

The soul, then, when she attains this state, has been so brought into union with her Lord that she beholds all things and all events through the light of the Divinity. She is no longer disturbed by any exterior happenings, however overshadowing and inexplicable, since she sees the Divine Will controlling all things, without which nothing does or can befall. Thus she wills all things to happen as they happen, because such is His Will. And she is at rest, because she has no desires, no plans, no objects of her own. She is distracted by no imaginations, and disquieted by no self-seeking, since she has no ambitions, no interests, apart from Him. Temptations may yet assail the lower part of her soul, but they cannot disturb the superior part, because there, utterly detached from all things, she enjoys that interior peace that is only won when she has made the perfect immolation of herself to her Lord.

Love makes likeness, for lovers always incline more and more to oneness of head and heart; even if at their first coming together their interests and tastes differ in certain ways, yet, as the effect of love is to unify, so, as love performs its work, they come to oneness in interest and will. It is impossible for union to exist without conformity of will, for to the extent that the will differs in each the lovers are divided, and, unless one surrenders the things that are the cause of division, separation will ensue. But the lover has no thought except to please the loved, and sacrifices gladly everything that causes displeasure, for love manifests itself in the eager desire to please and give pleasure.

Hence the soul is ever striving to rid herself of everything that may in any way be a source of displeasure to her Love. And as by her active efforts alone this could not be accomplished, her Love Himself performs the work in her, through the great purgation of sense and spirit,

[1] The Spiritual Canticle, Stanza xxii., § 3.

taking away all that may oppose itself to Him, and, when she is thus entirely emptied of all things, filling her with Himself, so that her very loving itself is His action in her.

How can any mere words explain this wonderful transformation and renovation of the soul, by which she partakes of the very life of the Bridegroom, and sees fulfilled in herself His promise that she shall live her life by Him?

And so she loves Him by means of His Love, since His Love is in her, supplying her weakness and bestowing upon her a power of beholding and loving that is not her own: everything is from Him. She in Him and He in her, thus they are perfect in one.

From the first days of her entry on the unitive way her love is ever growing and increasing; love begets love, and the more she loves, the more ardently the fire of this love burns within her.

She sees in God, as she loves in Him. As He is the source of her loving, He is also the source of her seeing. That seeing in God is a wonderful elevation of the soul by which she sees her Love and all things with His Divine Eyes, just as she loves Him with His Divine Love.

During these days of her espousals, these days in which she is united in love and will with Him, she is not yet perfected in all her powers, as she will be in the state of mystical marriage, so that, when He comes to her in these marvellous shewings, she is wrapt up out of herself, all her faculties suspended, and, for the period of that visitation, she is totally unconscious of everything happening around, lifted up into the spirit by this Divine Communication. So St. Paul, speaking of his own ecstasy, says: "Whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth." And St. John says: "I was in the spirit," to describe his mystic elevations and seeings; not that his spirit had actually departed from the body, but that, all the natural operations being suspended, he saw only in the spirit.

It is not surprising that this Divine shewing should thus deprive the soul of its normal consciousness, seeing that any very marvellous manifestation, even in the natural order, produces a somewhat similar effect; the beholder

sees, hears and perceives nothing until he returns to himself, save that which has so powerfully affected him.

Rapture and *Ecstasy* are alike in that they both result from a beholding so transcending our ordinary powers of perception that all the senses are suspended and the body is reduced to unconsciousness, but they differ in this, that, while *Rapture* is the sudden and almost instantaneous suspension of the faculties, *Ecstasy* is the gentle gliding of the soul into this suspension of her powers; in both cases the beginning is attended with physical suffering and natural fear, because the soul, perceiving its coming, struggles to resist, which she ought to do with all her strength, for her resistance will be successful if the visitation is not from God, whereas if it is Divine her efforts to resist will be in vain.

The soul will be caught up in this way, by one of these marvellous shewings, and so intense will be the spiritual impression that she is ravished out of herself, and all her natural powers arrested, during this time in which she sees in spirit the great things of God. This sight of God produces such an excess of love that she remains fixed in this beholding. Everything of earth, all perceptions of material things altogether cease, and she is inundated with the sweetness and joy of the presence of her Love. "So great at times," says St. John of the Cross, "is the suffering of the soul during these ecstatic visitations —and there is no other pain which so wrenches the very bones, and which so oppresses our natural forces—that, were it not for the special interference of God, death would ensue. And such it is to the soul . . . for she feels as if released from the body and a stranger to the flesh. Such graces cannot be perfectly received in the body, because the spirit of man is lifted up to the communion of the Spirit of God, Who visits the soul, and she is therefore of necessity in some measure a stranger to the body."[1] Walter Hylton says: "The soul is first reformed by perfection of virtues to the image of Jesus, and afterwards, when it pleaseth God to visit her, she is taken in from all earthly and fleshly affections, from vain thoughts and imaginings of bodily

[1] The Spiritual Canticle, Stanza xiii., § 4.

creatures, and, as it were, ravished and taken up from the bodily senses, and then by the grace of the Holy Ghost is enlightened to see Truth itself (which is God) and spiritual things with a soft, sweet, burning love in God, so perfectly that she becometh ravished with His love, and so the soul for the time is become one with God, and conformed to the image of the Trinity."[1]

The soul is now adorned within by many virtues. Through her one-ing with her God, she attains humility; she sees that everything wrought within her is not her work but His, and this humility is that by which she esteems herself to be truly nothing. Beholding all things in Him, she burns with the most ardent love to all other souls, counting them all far more pleasing to Him than herself. She is filled with amazement at His choice of her and at all the wonderful works He performs in her. Pride can find no lodging in her, for she knows that, if for an instant His Hand was withdrawn, she would fall instantly into her original misery and nothingness.

And so great is the power of this transforming of Love that it manifests itself even outwardly: for souls lifted up to this life of union shew even in their external actions a nobility, a gentleness and a sweetness, through which is clearly seen the spirit by which they are led.

The soul now advances, with Love ever increasing within, to the final stage of her pilgrimage, her *Mystical Marriage* with the Bridegroom, in which the union between them is perfected.

The Devil employs every means to hinder and distract her, to trip her up in some small matter in her total abandonment to the Divine Will, for if he can but turn her glance for a little to the most insignificant trifle, he feels he has done much; he rejoices more at a small imperfection in her—because it will hold her back from the perfect union to which she is hastening—than a grievous sin in one who is imperfect. He strives to use the senses and disturb the imagination to trouble her peace; he cannot reach the supreme part of her soul, however much he strives, to excite fear and dread in her sensitive faculties.

And now she is ready for that perfect union by which

[1] The Scale of Perfection, Bk. I., pt. i., cap. 8.

she shall be one with her Love. "Love," says St. John of the Cross "produces such a resemblance by the transformation of those who mutually love that one may be said to be the other, and both but one." [1] So St. Paul says: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." How wonderful, how close this union, in which the Beloved lives in the loving soul and the loving soul in the Beloved.

The bride-soul is now transformed into the Bridegroom. "As by natural marriage there are two in one flesh, so also in spiritual marriage between God and the soul there are two natures in one spirit and love: 'He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.'" [2] "In this marriage the two natures are so united, what is Divine is so communicated to what is human, that, without undergoing any essential change, each seems to be God—yet not perfectly so in this life, though still in a manner which can never be described nor conceived." [3]

In this Embrace of God the soul attains her perfection, the consummation of all the sufferings and all the graces that have been given her; all has been directed to this one end, perfect union with the Bridegroom through this Spiritual Marriage.

For the union between lovers is only perfected by marriage; it is then they become truly one. It is so with the soul and God: perfect union is through this mystic marriage. The soul henceforth has so given herself to God, and He has so given Himself to her, that every operation within her has become Deified. Her will works with perfect harmony with His, and not only so, but she is so thus in Him and He in her, that there is more than conformity, there is uniformity of will, by which she looks for that which is pleasing to Him; His pleasure, and His delight are likewise hers, and she enjoys that peace which the world cannot give, neither can it take away; she rests her peace on nothing save the Bridegroom alone. He is her peace, and so as the world cannot give Him, neither can it take Him from her or her from Him. Her every moment is also His: she thinks in Him, she acts in Him,

[1] The Spiritual Canticle, Stanza xii., § 7.
[2] ib., Stanza xxii., § 3.
[3] ib., Stanza xxii., § 5.

she moves in Him, she loves in Him, she lives her whole life in Him and she rests in Him.

She has advanced from those far-off days when she began to love very imperfectly, with much self-seeking and self-loving, blended with her love of Him, gradually progressing, slowly and by successive purgations, becoming less self-seeking and self-loving, and ever increasing in her love of Him, until now her love has become such that she has become conformed to the express image of His Likeness. Self-seeking and self-loving have been finally destroyed and she has eyes and heart for Him alone. She never seeks her own satisfaction, pleasure or gratification; she never desires to follow her own inclinations, or has any interest of her own. He is her All, she has so absolutely and unconditionally given herself to Him in this union, that He fills her whole being; in a way that passes conception, all her works while wrought by Him yet remain hers.

Love is the beginning and Love the ending: "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." Love feeds itself upon beholding; the soul's one beholding is her Love, as perfectly as such is possible here below. There is life in the beholding; as those who looked on the brazen serpent in the wilderness found life, so the soul finds her life in the beholding of Him who is her life.

Just as Eve, by turning her eye to behold the creature, lost the Creator and found death, so has the soul, by utterly turning away her eyes from the creature and fastening them upon the Creator, found her true life in Him.

St. John of the Cross thus endeavours to describe something of this life of Love, that yet transcends all description: "The operation of the Holy Ghost in a soul transformed in His love is this: His interior action within her is to kindle and set on fire, this is the burning of love, in union with which the will loves most deeply, being now one in love with that flame of fire. And thus the soul's acts of love are most precious, and even one of them more meritorious than many elicited not in the state of transformation. The transformation in love differs from the flame of love as habit differs from act, or as the glowing fuel from the

flame it emits, the flame being the effect of the fire which is burning.

"Hence the ordinary state of a soul transformed in love is that of fuel in the midst of the fire; the acts of such a soul are the flames which rise up out of the fire of love, vehement in proportion to the intensity of the fire of union, and to the rapture and absorption of the will in the flame of the Holy Ghost."[1]

The soul prays only for that which God wills her to pray, for that He wills her not to pray she does not pray,—formerly, in her eagerness to be dissolved and come to Him and see Him face to face, she prayed that death might swiftly come, but now she prays only that it may come when He wants it to come, she longs only that in all things He may have the full satisfaction of His good pleasure: so her prayers are no longer vehement and impetuous as once, for now even all her prayers are divine, since the Spirit itself prayeth within her with groanings that may not be uttered.

Identical in thought with this are the words of Our Lord to Juliana of Norwich: "I am the ground of thy beseeching. First it is My will that thou have it, and since I make thee to will it, and to beseech it, and thou beseechest it, how should it then be that thou shouldst not have thy beseeching."[2]

Of the soul's experience after the Mystical Marriage, Ruysbroeck says: "This simple unity can be had by none, save those who stand before the immense brightness and before Love above reason without restraint. In this presence the soul feels herself ceaselessly inflamed with love; and in this glow of love she finds neither beginning nor end, and she feels herself *one* with this burning fire of love. The spirit remains always on fire in herself, for her love is eternal, and she feels herself consumed with love; for she is attracted towards the refreshment of union with God, in which she burns with love. If she observes herself, she finds a distinction between herself and God, but where she burns she is pure and there is no distinction, and that is why she feels nothing save unity; for the im-

[1] The Living Flame of Love, Stanza i., §§ 3, 4.
[2] The Revelations of Juliana of Norwich XIV., cap. xli.

measurable flame of the Divine Love consumes and swallows up all it has enveloped in its course . . . the attracting unity of God is naught save boundless love . . . and we desire to be burnt and consumed in that love everlastingly, for in it the blessedness of all souls is found . . . we shall wander in that measureless love and it will lead us away into the boundless expanse of the love of God. There will be flow and outflow beyond ourselves in the unknown pleasure of the divine goodness and riches. There will be an eternal fusion and transfusion, absorption and re-absorption of ourselves in the glory of God."

"And the coming of the Bridegroom is so swift that He is ever coming, and He dwells within us with His exhaustless riches, and He is ever returning anew with such new brightness that it seems as if He had never come before. For the coming is beyond all limit of time, in an eternal NOW, and He is ever received with new desires and new delight. The joys and the pleasures which this Bridegroom brings with Him at His coming are boundless and limitless, for they are Himself. And this is why the eyes of the spirit, by which the loving soul beholds her Bridegroom, are opened so wide that they will never shut again. For the contemplation and the fixed gaze of the spirit are eternal in the secret manifestation of God. And the comprehension of the spirit is so widely opened as it waits the appearance of the Bridegroom, that the spirit itself becomes as vast as that which it comprehends. And so is God beheld and understood by God in Whom all blessedness is found."

She is lost, swallowed up in His Love, like the fuel in the fire she has become fire; lost in love she has become love, and although she is still on earth her life is in Heaven. And she possesses already something of the tranquil rest of the Divinity. Nothing disturbs and nothing troubles her; she is not troubled even by all her manifold sins and imperfections in the past; nor is she troubled by the like in others; she lives in this utter and tranquil abandonment to the Divine good pleasure of the Bridegroom in all things.

St. Angela of Foligno tries to tell something of her experience in this state.

"Once in prayer, and lifted up in spirit, God spoke to me, and looking up I saw God.

"But if you ask what I saw, I tell you that I saw Him, and more than this I know not how to tell, save that I saw a fulness and brightness with which I felt myself so greatly filled, that I know not how to speak of it, nor can I offer any similitude.

"Yet I saw not anything like a body, but it was as it is in Heaven, so great a beauty that I know not how otherwise to speak of it, save that I saw the Highest Beauty that contains all good. And all the saints stood before that fair Majesty to praise Him; moreover it seems to me that I stood therein but a little while, and God said to me: 'My most loving and sweet daughter, all the saints of paradise have for thee a special love and My Mother likewise, and I shall join you to their company.' Moreover, although these things were said to me, yet all that was said concerning His Mother and the saints seemed to me but little. But I was so delighted in Him, and so great was the sweetness which I felt concerning Him that I cared not to look at either Angels or Saints, for I saw that all the good, all the beauty of Saints and Angels was from Him and in Him and He Himself was All, the Highest Good and All Beauty, and I cared not to look at any creature . . ."

"It was said to me that the aforesaid unutterable manifestation of God is the same good which the Saints possess in life eternal, nor is this good other than the aforesaid, but then it is another kind of experience, and only different from the aforesaid in that the least saint who possesses thereof in eternal life hath more than can be given to any soul in this present life, before the death of the body, and my soul in that unutterable manifestation understood this.

"Very often my soul is lifted up to God, nor is my consent required, because while I neither hope nor think anything of Him, of a sudden my soul is raised to God and our Lord, and I take in the whole world, and it seemeth to me I am not on earth, but am staid in Heaven in God, and this

most unutterable state is far above all the other states which I have experienced, for it is of such fulness, clearness and certainty and such ennoblement and enlargement that I feel no other approaches it."

She has abandoned the past, she has abandoned the present, she has abandoned the future, she has abandoned herself and gone out of herself into Him.

And she awaits that final movement of love, when the torrent of love within her becomes so overwhelming that the last link that holds soul and body together is broken in its mighty tide, and she sees her Love face to face.

So magnificent, so inconceivably splendid is the height to which it pleases God our Lover to lift up the soul, even in this world, if she raises no obstacle to the free course of His operation, that He could say to St. Angela of Foligno, "Thou art I, and I am Thou."

And yet, alas! how few possess this glorious liberty, this matchless peace, and secure rest, which God, our King, our Redeemer, our Lover, is ready to bestow on the soul that will cast herself passive into His blessed hands. How clearly souls see the blessedness and peace that can be theirs, and yet they hold back. "Yes: I can see it is the only way, I know that the peace is indeed all you say, but I cannot pay the price." For the price is All. This blessed, glorious, total abandonment of our whole being, our past, our present, our future, into the Divine hands, without a single reservation of any sort whatsover. "God," said little Sister Teresa, "will refuse me nothing in heaven, because I have refused Him nothing on earth." She, in her inimitable way, tells the whole secret. When a soul makes this total immolation, then God can work and bring her to those sublime heights, which, as we have shewn, even in this world are, as it were, a very shewing of Eternity.

"With a great price gained I this freedom," may the soul say that has embraced this blessed way of immolating herself entirely to her King and Lover: then He finds nothing to resist the operation of His Spirit in her, the more absolute and complete that immolation, the greater the facility with which His work will be done.

But sad as it is to see those who never thus strive to cast

themselves without reserve into the Divine arms, still more sad is it to behold those who went far along the way, and then, because there was yet something to which they clung, went back, like those disciples long ago, "who turned back and walked no more with Him." They came so near, and they could have given Him so much glory; we can see where they might be now, where, as we beheld them then, we felt assured they would be, but, alas! they held back part of the price at one crucial moment, and brought no fruit to perfection.

If we want to reach the blessed experience of those who are called to the Marriage of the Lamb, we must give all: He gave all, He will give all, but He will have all.

There awaits this glorious life of Light and Love, and the very embrace of God for that soul that, leaving all, will likewise leave herself, that, emptied of all, He in His great love may come and fill her and have her for His own.

CHAPTER XV

VISION—VOICES—REVELATIONS—STIGMATIZATION

We now come to consider those unusual and, as some call them, extraordinary graces and manifestations, such as *Visions, Voices, Revelations,* which sometimes accompany the mystical experience of which we are speaking. Unusual and extraordinary, in the sense, that it is possible to attain the highest degree of union with God by Mystical Marriage without them, they enter into the world of mystical experience, and therefore must be taken into account.

It may be objected that Rapture and Ecstacy are also extraordinary experiences and should fall under the same category. To this I answer that while, under some aspects, they may be considered as exceptional experiences, yet they are on a wholly different plane from Visions, Voices, Revelations, and other extraordinary manifestations. These latter are independent of the soul's progress in grace, and indeed may be bestowed upon those not in grace at all, while supernatural Rapture and Ecstacy are simply the result of the Divine showings overpassing the weakness of the human instrument that receives it, much in the same way as the natural eye is blinded by the direct sight of the sun. Indeed, even in the natural order, the beholding of some supremely amazing sight temporarily arrests the perceptive powers of the soul from all else; if this occurs in merely natural things, it is not surprising that similar results are produced by the beholding of supernatural things.

Such overpassing of the soul's powers is not infrequent in those who are in the earlier stages of the unitive life, but

when the soul has received increased strength by the final consummation of Mystical Marriage, then these experiences cease, because the powers of the soul have received a shadowing of that perfect beholding in Heaven, where, despite the inexplicable wonder of the shewing, the soul's powers are made equal to the perception of it.

But many of the experiences we are here describing are of an entirely different character. Visions and Voices, at least, may be seen and heard not only by souls in grace, but by those out of grace; moreover they can proceed from Satanic as well as from Divine agency, because the devil can simulate the Divine action, as we see in the case of Moses before Pharaoh. The Patriarch's wonders were imitated by the magi of Egypt, but imitation must always stop short as theirs did; it can never be co-equal with reality.

I know there are some who would seem to argue that every extraordinary manifestation must necessarily be evil and of Satanic origin. Surely such an attitude is as mistaken as the contrary opinion, that all such shewings are Divine and to be trusted implicitly. Where God works there the Devil works also, and by his simulated wonders strives to deceive the soul with false Visions and Revelations. The fact that there are false Visions and Revelations is no more an argument against the existence of the true, than the existence of the true is an evidence that none are false. The existence of base coin proves, not that all coin is base, but that true coinage exists; if the true did not exist, there would be no imitation.

I take first the matter of *Visions,* which are of three kinds: (1) *Sensitive,* that is, perceived by the natural eye; (2) *Imaginative*, that is, received in the imagination; (3) *Intellectual,* that is, seen in the intellect alone.

Sensitive visions are easily the most common. It is almost impossible to have any large circle of friends in any part of the world without coming across someone, at least, who, at one period or another of his life, has not had experience of these visions. The natural eye sees them, whether by the removal of some veil that hides the supernatural—as is suggested in the case of the young man with Eliseus: "The servant of the man of God, rising early,

went out, and saw an army round about the city, and horses and chariots; and he told him saying:—'Alas, alas, my lord, what shall we do?' He answered:—'Fear not, for there are more with us than with them.' And Eliseus prayed and said: 'Lord open his eyes, that he may see.' And the Lord opened the eyes of the servant and he *saw*: the mountains were full of horses and chariots of fire round about Eliseus"—or by an angel or spirit assuming some material body, in order that they may be seen through the medium of natural sight.

Such visions as these may accompany the early stages of Contemplation, although they will generally be wholly absent in the more perfect degrees of it. When God is their Author they always produce the effect He designs, as in the case of the Jew Ratisbonne, to whom Our Lady appeared in the Church of St. Andrea della frate in Rome; he entered it a scoffing unbeliever and came out with the gift of Faith. These visions may occur to those already in grace, as to Sister Teresa of Lisieux, when the statue of Our Lady assumed the appearance of life on the occasion of her miraculous cure.

The evil angels make their appearance both as angels of light—as the Devil appeared to St. Martin of Tours, in glittering glory, pretending to be the Saviour and demanding Divine worship—or in all their terrifying and unmasked malignity, as the Devil again appeared to St. Martin, as he lay dying, who beholding his ancient enemy, exclaimed: "Beast of blood, thou shalt have no part in me:"—or simply to trouble and disturb God's servants, as by the strange fire with which they sought to hinder the monks in building Monte Cassino; and also in other ways manifold, of which we have abundant evidence in these last days.

Of course, no angel or spirit, good or bad, can appear to anyone in this way, without the Divine permission.

Walter Hylton thus describes how the nature of the appearance may be determined: "All such feelings may be good, wrought by a good angel, and they may be deceivable, wrought by a wicked angel, when he transfigures himself into an angel of light. For the Devil may, when he hath leave, counterfeit in bodily feeling the likeness of the same things which a good angel may work. For just as the

good angel cometh with light so can the Devil. And as he can do this in matters of seeing, so can he do in matters of the other senses."[1] He gives this rule for the discerning of the true from the false, which may also serve in the case of revelations and locutions. "Beware in that time (of the shewing) or soon after, and wisely consider the stirrings of thy heart; for if by the occasion of the pleasure and liking thou takest in the said seeing or vision, thou feelest thy heart drawn from the minding and beholding of Jesus, and from spiritual exercises and thinking of thyself and thy defects, or the inward desire of virtues and the spiritual knowing and feeling of God, to set the sight of thy heart, affection, delight, and rest principally on the said feelings or visions, then this feeling is suspicious and likely to come from the enemy; therefore, be it never so liking and wonderful, refuse it and assent not thereto, for this is a sleight of the enemy. . . . But if it so be that manner of feeling maketh thee more devout, more fervent in prayer, and though it be so that it astonish thee in the beginning, yet afterwards it turneth and quickeneth thy heart to more desire of virtues, increaseth thy love to God and thy neighbour, maketh thee more humble in thine own eyes—by these tokens thou mayest know that it is of God, wrought by the presence and working of a good angel."[2]

The second kind of vision is that called *Imaginative*. This is produced in the imagination with all the vividness and intensity of reality, so vivid and so real that the beholder often believes that what is shewn is seen by the natural eye. These visions are more subtle and produce a stronger impression on the soul than the visions which are merely sensitive. Sometimes they are of events already past, at other times of things that are still future, or again of things happening in an entirely different part of the world from that in which the beholder is living. Thus St. Benedict beheld his sister carried up into Heaven in the form of a dove on the occasion of her death, and there have been a long series of similar happenings occurring down to this very moment. All that Walter Hylton has laid down for the discerning of the character of the sensitive vision, applies likewise to the imaginative vision.

[1] The Scale of Perfection, Bk. I., pt. i., cap. x.
[2] ib., Bk. I., pt. i., cap. xi.

The third form of vision is that called *Intellectual*, the most perfect of the three and that in which there is the least danger of Satanic imitation.

These visions impress the soul more profoundly than either of the others, and they may remain distinctly visible to her for long periods of time, for although, when occupied with other affairs, the soul may not perceive them, yet when she returns again within herself she perceives them there and realises that the vision has never really left her. This permanence, so to speak, belongs to the essential character of the intellectual vision, by which it is easily distinguishable from either sensitive or imaginative visions, which are brief, transitory, and never leave any permanent impression on the soul.

St. John of the Cross divides the intellectual vision into two classes, one which he calls *corporeal*—all material things in the Universe made visible to the soul by a special light from God, in the same way as St. Benedict beheld the whole world in a simple ray of light: and the other which he names *incorporeal*—that of angels and spirits and that of the Divine Essence, which last is granted only to the Blessed in Heaven, except when it is granted transiently in this life, by the favour of God and abstraction of spirit, as befell St. Paul and others, who for a brief while have been granted, even in this world, a beholding of God altogether beyond their power to describe.

Just as our eyes behold material things in natural light, so does the intellect, in supernatural light, given by God, behold the like things interiorly but in a more perfect manner (corporeal vision), and such other things (incorporeal) as God wills the soul to perceive.

When God grants this favour to a soul, He gives to her that supernatural light, in which, with perfect distinctness, she beholds whatever He wills, whether things of Heaven or of earth, and the things thus seen by the soul are so impressed on her by God that when God enlightens her she sees them again as in a mirror, just as she did at the first showing.

The effects produced on the soul by these visions are a certain quiet tranquility, an increase of joy, sweetness, purity, love, and humility, by which the soul is lifted up to

God and receives such enlightenment as she could never gain by any effort of her own; sometimes it may be more of one virtue, sometimes of another, according to the disposition of the soul and God's will.

The Devil can imitate these visions, but only in a very imperfect way. They do not abide in the soul and they cannot make the permanent impression upon her that the Divine vision does, rather they are immediately effaced, unless the soul endeavours to attach herself to them, in which case they will produce a certain dryness of spirit, destitute of both love and humility. Moreover they produce a certain self-satisfaction and self-esteem, coupled with a tendency to make much of such shewings and an eager desire to have them.

Visions, even the highest and most perfect of all, are never to be desired or sought by the soul that will tread the way of Mystical Contemplation and attain to the perfect union by her Mystical Marriage with the Bridegroom. Although true, they may only hinder her advance if she turns aside to rest in them as something desirable in themselves; she desires God alone and can be satisfied with nothing less than Himself. If visions occur, she does not rest in them, but passes them by, having her interior eye fixed on her only end, her "oneing" with her Lord.

Voices are intimately connected with visions, just as sight and hearing have an intimate relation with each other in the natural order. Words often explain what is seen and so it is that visions are often explained by voices which declare the meaning of the vision. Ezekiel would not have understood the meaning of the valley of dry bones, or Peter the meaning of the great linen sheet, full of all manner of beasts, let down to the earth, unless a voice had explained these things to them.

These voices, like the visions, are threefold in character —(1) *sensitive,* when they strike the natural ear and are heard like any other sound; (2) *imaginative,* when heard in the imagination, and yet often with such distinctness that the hearer believes the sound to have been heard with his ears; (3) *intellectual,* when the voice sounds in the intellect alone.

In the two first cases there is always danger of delusion,

for the voice may proceed from God, the Devil, or our own mind; the source of the communications can only be determined by their effect.

The *intellectual* voice, on the other hand, cannot be imitated by the Devil in the same way as the others. The intellectual word, as St. John of the Cross says, falls into three divisions, that is (1) successive, (2) formal, and (3) substantial.

The first occurs when the soul is absorbed in the consideration of some particular subject, and while attentively considering the matter which occupies her thoughts, puts words and reasonings together to such purpose, discovering by reflection things unknown before with such facility and clearness, that it appears to her as if it is not herself who does this, but some third person, interiorly speaking to her, reasoning and answering, and informing. There is indeed good ground for this notion, as the mind then reasons with itself, much as one man does with another. Although it is the soul who thus reasons with herself, yet the Holy Ghost often aids her in the formation of these words and reasonings, and when the Holy Ghost so acts within her there is no danger of illusion. But illusions may and do arise when the intellect works unaided, for a man may have a true principle, and then reasoning about it by his own ability alone, easily fall into delusions and reach false conclusions about it.

Moreover, the Devil, too, is ever on the watch to intrude his own reflections and mingle them with the merely natural reasonings of the soul, or even with those inspired by the Holy Spirit, beginning with that which appears true and then gradually leading the soul ever farther away from the truth, till she is finally snared in the darkness of error. These successive words, therefore, can have their origin either from God the Holy Ghost, moving and enlightening, or from the natural light of the intellect; or again, from the suggestion of the evil spirit.

The source of these voices may be discerned thus:—(1) When love is kindled in the soul and she is humbly and reverently conscious of that love, it is a sign that they are from the Holy Ghost, who bestows these graces through love; and when they are over, the soul is left affectionately

disposed towards God and inclined to good, even if at times the will remains dry. (2) When the voices come from the natural light of the intellect alone they will leave the will cold, although not inclined to vanity or evil. (3) When the voices come from the evil spirit, they dry up the love of God in the soul and incline her to vanity, self-esteem, and complacency. At times they produce a certain false humility together with a fervent affection, which is yet readily distinguished from the real thing, for the humility is merely affected, and the fervour has its root in mere natural feeling, by which it differs totally from the supernatural love which God puts into the soul. When the evil spirit is the Author, he persuades the soul to a foolish attachment to these communications, in order to lead her to give herself up wholly to them, so that she will listen to no advice from those who would guide her, and thus she loses any virtue she may possess.

The *formal* voice is that which the soul clearly understands is spoken by a third person quite independently of her own operations. These voices are heard without any effort on the part of the soul, when she is not thinking at all of what is uttered within her. They come sometimes as complete conceptions, at other times as a single word, or as if in answer to a question, and occasionally as successive words in the mode we have already described; but whatever the mode, it is entirely independent of the active participation of the soul.

Generally speaking they are only sent to enlighten and instruct her as to a particular object, and it is not necessary that they should have any effect other than that for which they are sent. Whenever they are from God, they effect their object in the soul, rendering her ready to accomplish what is commanded, and giving her such clear light that she understands the meaning of what she hears. They do not remove the dislike and dread with which the soul may regard the work they commanded; often they increase it. This is God's work, in order to instruct the soul and to perfect her in humility. Repugnance arises when some important office or work is commanded, for if hidden and humble things are commanded, the soul is ready and eager to comply. If, however, the voices come from the evil

spirit, the soul is ready to undertake important works, and unwilling to embrace those that are humble.

The third or *substantial* voice, although also formal, differs from the formal word in this, that the substantial word always produces its effect immediately on the soul. This word is like in power to the Lord's, when by a word, He restored health to the sick and called back the dead to life. "Ipse dixit et facta sunt." What He says *is*. This word spoken in the soul, instantly produces in the soul that which it expresses. If the Lord says: "Fear not," instantly the soul, although before terrified and overcome with fear, will immediately be filled with courage; again, if He says: "Love thou Me," the soul is at once flooded with love, and perceives in herself the very substance of love.

St. John of the Cross thus describes the attitude the soul is to assume towards these words: "She is not called upon to do or attempt anything with regard to these words, but to be resigned and humble when God thus acts upon her. She has not to undervalue or fear them, nor to labour in doing what they enjoin her, for *God by His substantial word works in and by the soul Himself*. The soul needs not to reject these words, for the effect of them remains substantially within her, full of blessing. . . Nor need the soul fear illusion here, for these words are beyond the reach of the understanding or the evil spirit; he can produce no substantial effect in the soul whatever so as to impress his word upon her, and there is no comparison between his word and God's."[1]

By such voices has God called souls to special missions in His Church, as in the case of St. Catherine of Siena, who although a child in years, by His inspiration went to the Papal Court at Avignon, and spoke the words God put in her mouth, with such power that although the majority of the Cardinals, being French, hated the very thought of going to Rome, yet overborne by the fiery eloquence and authority with which she spoke, they were constrained against their will and judgment, to assent to her word and return with the Pope to the Holy City. A like instance is that of the voices who gave St. Joan of Arc her extraordinary mission for the deliverance of France.

[1] The Ascent of Mount Carmel, Bk. II., cap. xxxi., § 3.

Revelations are the uncovering of something previously hidden. The fact that there are three Divine Persons subsisting in the one Divine Nature of God, is a showing of truth that was hidden until it was manifested—its uncovering was a revelation about God that no human ingenuity or reasoning could have ever discovered.

The whole revelation, entire and complete, concerning our salvation, has been given by Jesus Christ, and there neither is nor can be any other revelation or any other way of salvation. "There is no other name given under Heaven whereby men must be saved."

The revelations made through God's Saints add nothing to the substance of that revelation; they bring its details into clearer light, just as the continued study of a noble picture reveals new depths of unexpected beauty not fully comprehended at its first beholding. In like manner, the shewings in successive ages to God's saints, have increased our appreciation of the depths of the Divine Love and Wisdom in Jesus Christ, but it is ever the same Christ, the same Love, the same Wisdom. Thus the revelations to St. Margaret concerning the Divine Heart of Our Lord tell us more of the marvellous love of that Heart for sinners, and increase our love and devotion to His Divine Person. The revelations through Juliana of Norwich, St. Gertrude, St. Hildegarde, St. Angela of Foligno, St. Teresa, and others tell forth in varying ways the *one* love-story of the Son of God; they differ utterly and irrevocably from those false revelations that would preach "another gospel."

The test of St. John applies here: "Every spirit that confesses Christ has come in the flesh, is of God, and every spirit that denieth Christ has come in the flesh, is not of God."

No matter how beautiful, how splendid, how magnificent the revelation, it is contrary to revealed Truth as contained in the Dogmatic teaching of the Church, it is not of God, and must be utterly and unhesitatingly rejected. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became as fools;" these words of St. Paul exactly describe the children of this generation, who, heaping to themselves teachers, having itching ears, turn from the Truth to follow the wanderings of minds unbalanced by the vagaries of false revelation, received

through the medium of automatic or planchette writing, which they eagerly acclaim as the new gospel, while it is only the cunning craft of the Devil, by which he seeks to corrupt the whole world.

The revelations God makes to His saints are sometimes of Himself, sometimes of future events, sometimes of other persons and places, sometimes of work which He destines them to do. When these revelations are of Himself, they produce a sweetness and delight which exceed all else and which no words can describe. These shewings of His Attributes, His Mercy, His Omnipotence, His Love, His Goodness, so ravish the soul out of herself into the ecstatic contemplation of the spirit, that she loses consciousness of all else, and if she utters words while in this state, she realizes their inadequacy to describe what she experiences; like St. Paul who, when lifted up into this knowledge of God, could only say that he "heard secret words not given to man to utter." This knowledge of God, so surpassingly wonderful, is a certain contact of the soul with the Divinity, a foretasting of the glory of the face-to-face Vision. Such knowledge as this, so sweet and profound that it touches the very depths of the soul, cannot be interfered with by the Devil, for he can feign nothing like it, because there is nothing comparable with it.

Then again, God sometimes draws aside the veil that hides the future, and gives the soul a sight of the things that shall be hereafter. To Abraham was revealed the destruction of Sodom and Gomorra; to St. Benedict the destruction of his Monastery at Monte Cassino. This kind of revelation really belongs to the spirit of prophecy. Throughout the ages this unveiling of the future to certain of God's children has always been going on; sometimes it concerns the fate of kingdoms, sometimes of individuals, and sometimes it concerns themselves, the place, time, and manner of their death, etc. Again He reveals what is happening to others elsewhere, as He shewed St. Benedict the child Placid when he had fallen into the water, and the death of his sister Scholastica; and sometimes, even the thought of the heart is revealed. as was that of the monk who held the lamp for the Saint.

With the revelation may come the call to sacrifice.

When God showed to Gemma Galgani the fearful sacrileges being committed by the chosen ministers of the Sanctuary, and she fell almost senseless at the showing, He said to her: "Wilt thou be my victim?" and her generous heart answered: "Yes, Lord, take me." She drank of that chalice of expiation to the full. In like manner is God showing souls to-day, drawing aside the veil, giving them a sight of the state of the world as He sees it, and then asking the same sacrifice of them that He asked of Gemma.

Time and again in the course of the centuries has the world been amazed by a most extraordinary phenomenon, which has been called Stigmatization. The open wounds of the Saviour in hands and feet and side, even the piercing of the head to mark the crown of thorns, have been reproduced in the bodies of certain of God's servants. Blood has flowed forth of these wounds, sometimes on Fridays about those hours when the Saviour hung tortured and bleeding on His Cross, and at other times, more or less continuously. It has been seen and testified to, by witnesses so numerous and so reliable, as to exclude all possible doubt about the fact. True, external phenomena such as this have been comparatively rare events in the passing of the centuries. However, at least one such is living at the present time, and another, Gemma Galgani, has only passed from the world in quite recent years, well within the memory of most of us.

How are we to explain an occurrence so extraordinary and so miraculous? St. Francis of Assisi, in the 13th century, and Gemma Galgani in our own may be taken as two typical examples, in whom we may study God's extraordinary work. Both were penetrated with the most intense and abiding devotion to the Passion of the Saviour, His wounds, His pangs, His sufferings, their daily food; the one desire of their life was to be united with Him in His sufferings, to be conformed to the express image of His likeness, not in His splendid glory, but in His agony and bitter pain. As the years of life sped on, the furnace of love burning within them only burnt the more strongly, till they seemed to have passed into the Crucified, and the Crucified to have passed into them. And a wonderful thing happens. The love and suffering of these souls "oned" with Jesus

Crucified, so overflows that the very wounds and marks of their Crucified Lord appear in their mortal bodies. Here we seem to find the clue to one of those marvels of God's power that has most strongly impressed the imagination of human kind; certainly no other supernatural manifestation of an external kind has proved so arresting as this. What is true in the two cases we have mentioned, appears to be true of all other like cases so far as they have been examined; an altogether extraordinary love of the Crucified, joined to an equally extraordinary desire to be like Him, to feel what He felt, and endure in the body what He endured, as far as such is possible for a creature. Love explains all.

We must speak, in passing, of another extraordinary manifestation called *Levitation,* which has been seen in many of Christ's lovers. The body of the one rapt in prayer has been raised from the ground, and has remained in the air without any support, the ordinary operation of the law of gravity apparently suspended, or the body while in this state of prayer, temporarily gifted with something of its future glory. However, we are rather concerned with the fact than with its explanation, and the fact is undoubted. Such a manifestation can proceed not only from Divine, but also from Satanic power; moreover, it has been produced by modern spiritism.

Many other extraordinary manifestations such as bi-location, or the appearance of the same person in two places at once; miracles of healing, raising of the dead, casting forth of evil spirits, and others too numerous to mention, although they sometimes touch mystical experience, are only accidental to it, and so I do not deal with them now.

The soul who has been quickened by the love of the Divine Lover neither desires nor looks for any extraordinary or unusual manifestations in herself; if her Lover bestows them, she pays but little heed to them; she has neither will nor desire for anything else but her union with Him; she passes all the gifts that she may possess the Giver. Her eternal Marriage with the Bridegroom, her everlasting "oneing" with Him, this and this alone is the one end from which she can never be turned aside. Not that she

undervalues any of His gifts, indeed, they only increase her humility, for she knows she is utterly unworthy of them, and if external, they only cover her with confusion and cause her to realise more fully the depth of her own nothingness. But she only loves Him the more, and finds her immeasurable nothingness and inexpressible unworthiness the ground of her confidence, for He has loved her and chosen her for Himself, He wills to have her wholly for Himself, and she wills with most total *abandon* to give herself wholly to Him. She lives only for Him; she cannot exist without Him.

CHAPTER XVI

HUMAN LOVE AND DIVINE LOVE

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,"—only the beginning, for "perfect love casts out fear," and love, not fear, is the mightiest power in all the world. When these two come in conflict, love must win, even in the natural order, for we see how the fear even of death is overcome, and one gives his life for another when love is the impelling motive.

How great is the difference between the obedience of love and fear; where there is only fear, there is obedience just as long as the watching eye is there to compel it, but once that is withdrawn obedience ends; but where love rules, there obedience will be rendered in exactly the same way, whether the one to whom it is given is present or absent.

As it is in the natural order, so is it also in the supernatural; when a soul has only the fear of God, she may continue serving Him as long as no strong temptation comes to shake her constancy, but let the strong attraction of some human affection arise and the fear of God will be swept away in the torrent of temptation.

Love is the thing most to be desired of everything in the world, and most to be feared and dreaded; all depends on its nature. If it is supernatural, it is the most precious of all possessions, seeing we can never attain our end without it; and if it is natural it is most to be feared, for nothing can entangle and endanger the soul so much.

We look at supernatural love under two aspects—God's love of us and our love of God. There must be two for love to operate, because love must find an object on which to pour itself out. Think in what amazing fashion God's love has been poured out on us; He made us out of nothing, gave us all the wonderful powers of intellect and will, and destines us for the very face to face beholding of Himself, nay more, the very possession and transformation into Himself. How wonderfully is that love manifested in the way in which He has created us, and so formed our

heart to love Him, that it can never find its true love and rest in any other.

Love is always manifesting, it cannot be hid, it must shew itself, and so our God Who is Love Itself, is ever manifesting forth His love for His creatures.

But after all our miserable ingratitude, His Love shines out in more wonderfully amazing splendour in the mystery of the Incarnation, that clothing with flesh, through which He lifts up our nature to such an intimate relation with Himself, finally attaining its supreme manifestation in the Sacrifice of Calvary, where Love shows itself in a way that passes all conception, for there God commended His Love towards us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. The wonder of Calvary is this arresting, shewing forth of the Love of God, not to His friends, but to His foes. And how full and abundant was that satisfaction! One drop of that Blood was of price sufficient to ransom the whole world, but Love knows no measure until it has given all, and His Love was only satisfied by the shedding of the very last drop of His Blood for our ransoming. And so resplendent is the merit of that scarlet tide, that it is more than sufficient for the ransom of a million worlds like this, if such had existence and need of redemption.

Think, too, of all the heaped up torment and fearful darkness and unutterable desolation in which He died, His Body agonized and tortured in every part,—and a Body endowed with a sensitiveness to pain beyond anything we can ever conceive,—and His Soul suffering an anguish inexpressibly more terrible than all the pain of His Body.

All the words of Calvary are words of love and forgiveness. Love is always giving and He is giving up to the last. He gave Himself on that Thursday night, He is giving His Life now, and He gives His Mother because she is the last gift He has to give. What the giving of Calvary was like we shall never, never know on earth: that we shall only know in Heaven.

Then look back on our life that is past, and see how His Love has followed us from the first moment when we entered the world until now. Mark how He has bestowed mercy upon mercy, grace upon grace despite our miserable misuse of all His gifts, how patient with our waywardness,

how tender in our falls, how unforgetting in all our foolish, blind forgetfulness. What is the story of our life, but one long story of His giving? Love must give and Love gives without measure. What a miserable disappointment we have been to Him, and yet He has not wearied nor cast us off. How well we remember His Voice speaking to us and calling us—we know we were not mistaken—and yet after those most wonderful moments with Him, we have again and again turned our eyes from His matchless Love, to fasten them once again on perishing creatures. Shall we ever begin to love in return?

Love is ever thinking of giving pleasure. If you see two lovers, how they continue to surprise each other with some new gift, how they study the likings and fancies of each other, and even anticipate them in their eager desire to please.

It is so with our Saviour; He Himself says: "I have not called you servants but friends, for all things I have received of My Father I have made known to you." He loves so much that He will share everything with us, if only we will let Him. What utter fools we are! How often, when He comes to set before us His precious treasures, we turn away from them to regard some worthless trifle of time. What a return for His condescension! He is our King, our Lord, our Master, but He is infinitely more, He is our Lover. We are His soldiers, yes, we are all in the fighting forces of His Army; but there is a far closer, more astonishing relationship than that, He is our Lover. King, yes, but Lover too! All His riches are ours. We of ourselves have only our poor miserable poverty, but He enriches us with His unsearchable riches. "All things are yours," so He says to us, and we possess them all if we are His true lovers.

So far I have only spoken of His Love, since ours seems hardly worth speaking about, and yet, since in His inconceivable condescension He vouchsafes to have it, there is just a little to be said about it.

Let us see our side. If two people love, they must both love alike. Love cannot be all on one side: if you see one doing all the loving and giving and the other cold and indifferent, taking everything and giving nothing, you

exclaim, "O what a fool!" Now our Lord is pouring forth His great Love on us all the time, and we are either stupidly insensible to it, or else take it all as a right.

Then again, how often the soul fastens her affections on His gifts instead of on Himself. It is like a lover being greeted with, "What have you brought," instead of "I'm so glad you've come." How often we find that because a soul has made some little sacrifice, she expects nothing but consolation, and practically says the Lord is only doing His duty in giving it. And then, when He takes away these sensible gifts that He may draw her love from them to Himself, we hear something like this: "I've left all for Him and why does He treat me like this? What in the world is He about?"

We value the Lord's gifts, but it is not His gifts but His Own dear Self we love, or ought to love. Love goes right forth of all gifts to the giver. There must be love on both sides. Our love will be poor and imperfect at the best, but at least we can love with all the powers of our soul, and then He will come and help our miserable weakness and Himself love in us and lead us on until we are finally joined in one spirit with Him.

How very ready are some with protests of what they *will* do, but when the moment comes and you want their help, they are nowhere to be seen. What promises the Apostles made, and what a miserable performance!

Love, after all, consists in deeds, not words; it is what we are prepared to do for Him, not what we say, that counts. Love manifests itself in sacrifice, and it is our readiness to sacrifice ourself for Him that is the test of our love.

When the soul enters into the darkness, when every sensible and spiritual consolation is withdrawn, when she perceives nothing, feels nothing and yet holds fast to Him, then she gives a true manifestation of love. Every day comes with many small opportunities for sacrifice, and sometimes with great ones. Souls that really love must suffer, because suffering and sacrifice are the expression of love. St. Margaret Mary, when her sufferings ceased, said she could not live without them, and indeed her saying was quickly verified, since her life ended very soon after her sufferings ceased.

When love is strong in the soul she seeks for nothing save conformity to the likeness of her Love, she wants ever to become more and more like Him, and delights in all those things that seem so extraordinarily contrary to nature: suffering, darkness and desolation, because they liken her the more to Him. There are always so many splendid opportunities of bearing some little trifle, to show that our love is real. A sharp, bitter or sarcastic remark, and how often the reply is as good as was given or better; but if love is strong, it will be passed unnoticed, perhaps with a little bit of a struggle,—and then something else comes. When we are already fully occupied with one thing and wondering how we shall get through it, someone comes along most sweetly with more, thinking we should like something to do! Scarcely has that one departed when another brings an hour's work, which of course will only take a minute. Well, if we love we shall be glad our Lord has given us the chance to bear a little uncomplainingly for Him. They are very small things, after all, but they will help us to rise up to bigger things later on. Such small things are coming all day long, wherever we are, whether in the cloister or in the world, and if we take them all joyfully for the love of our King, we will show ourselves true lovers.

When the soul has passed through the privation of all sensible consolation and spiritual consolation too, and going beyond herself has in spirit reached her Love, then she manifests the character of a faithful lover, and He Himself will be within her, and she will love Him by means of His own Divine Power, and render Him an adequate return, because her will has become so elevated into the Divinity that its every act is Divine. The soul is now a living flame of love, flowing with unceasing intensity, for she has come to the embrace of pure Love Itself.

Love is her life, she lives by loving, and just as to the onlooker the expressions of lovers seem exaggerated and extravagant, so is it now with the soul. She is so swallowed up in love, that she can pay heed to none save Him she loves, since now He has become her very life. All the terrible sufferings the soul has experienced, all her tremendous purgations have resulted in this most marvellous transformation of herself into the Bridegroom. M

Her whole being has been renewed in the great fire of this love, so that even the sensitive nature itself shares in the great transformation. She now loves creatures, but in a totally different way from that she did before, for the love she poured out on creatures gave them a place in her heart that took away from the love she bore to Him, but now the love that she bears them has its origin in Him, and she loves no longer in her way, but in His. How totally different is this loving *in* Him to that loving *with* Him which she showed before. Then her love to creatures distracted her from Him, now He loves them in her and she in Him. It was of this love our Lord spoke when He said to St. Catherine of Siena: "Love of Me and of her neighbour are one and the same thing, and as far as the soul loves Me she loves her neighbour also, because love towards him issues from Me. . . When she has discovered the advantage of this unitive love in Me, through which she truly loves herself, extending her desire for the salvation of all the world, thus coming to the aid of its neediness, she strives, as she has done good to herself by the conception of virtue, from which she has drawn the life of grace, to fix her eye on the needs of her neighbour in particular."

How utterly imperfect that old love was, for the soul only loved in a human way. She loved them for the qualities she found in them, she was drawn by the character of the one and repelled by that of the other; her love was narrow, constrained, restricted within the straight vision of human affection.

Sister Teresa, reflecting on this one day, said: "Before He came into the world and gave that most inconceivable manifestation of His Love on the Cross, He could only command us to love our neighbour as ourselves, and indeed that seems much when we reflect how well we do love ourselves, but when He came He gave His new Commandment—'Love one another as I have loved you.'" And as she reflected on this, she said: "Well, He loved the Apostles who certainly were full of defects, earthly-minded and very imperfect, and yet despite all their meanness and selfishness, He loved them to the end and gave His life for them." So she said: "I

see I have been loving my Sisters on quite wrong lines, and henceforth I will love them solely in Him, love them because He does, never be disconcerted or surprised at any faults or failings, but surprised and delighted at the smallest signs of virtue.'' [1]

That is exactly what the soul does in this new mode of loving: her love is wide, broad, all-embracing, like that of her Lord, and as she not only loves in Him but loves with His love, her heart is enlarged and strives to encircle the whole earth in its embrace. She loves with a marvellous tenderness and gentleness, is repelled by no defect, shocked by no sin, however great, disturbed by no failure, however disappointing, but is ever long-suffering and filled with supreme pity for those who fall. She despairs of none, for there is not a soul that is hopeless in her eyes, she sees in the most abandoned sinner the picture of herself, had He not lifted her up into His embrace, and so she is overpassed by the thought of all her unworthiness, humbled to nothingness, fired with eager desire to lift up the fallen and draw the sinner into the heart of God. Just as our Lord is never surprised at our defects and failures, for He finds us full of them, so the soul is never surprised or disconcerted, but goes like her Lord with eager haste to upraise the fallen and set them on their feet again.

In such wise loves the soul in God, her loving is Divine, because she loves like Him. We can never be too big and too wide in the reach of our love; we must love as He, and as He excludes none from the reach of His heart, neither may we.

And we must suffer joyfully, endure the most terrific interior darkness without giving a sign outside that we are suffering at all; one dear child whom our Lord led into this fearful night showed the most extraordinary courage, her voice was always raised in song, her face always smiling, her hands always ready to help and cheer any in need; thus all her terrible interior trials remained quite hidden, and from without there was nothing to show that a ripple disturbed the placid surface of her soul. That is what He wants. The saints of God did not look sad when they were having a bad time. When everything goes wrong, well, just praise Him, because it is what He wants,

[1] *Histoire d'une Ame*, chap ix.

and, above all, keep smiling. If our Lord has taken a fancy to something, we must give it Him with a generous heart, as a mark and pleasure of our love.

Our love offerings are very small and worthless, yet He is pleased with them, just as the Mother takes the gift of some crumpled flower from the hand of the child who comes with eager step to bring the little offering to her. So God does not look at the value of our gift, but at the love that inspires it.

We never apprize a gift by its mere cost value, we do not say this gift is worth five shillings and that five pounds; no, we often cherish the thing most worthless materially, just because it is the manifestation of the love of the giver.

And what a joy there is in giving! There is nothing quite like it in all the world. Our King Himself has said: "It is more blessed to give that to receive," and do we not experience the truth of it every day? What joy fills our heart when we can bring some little love-token to our King, and if at times we are able to bring the gift of a big cross, is there not a wonderful, supernatural joy, that underlies the sacrifice? I speak to those who love, to those who have seen and tasted how sweet the Lord is.

Yes, our life would be wanting in one of its most precious elements if we were denied the joy of suffering and sacrifice. I know this sounds unintelligible except to those who love. There is a wonderful incomparable joy when we bring our poor little gifts and His transforming hand touches them, and He accepts them from us. There is love and joy in sacrifice; you cannot love without it.

The closer the soul draws to the Heart of God the greater grows her love and pity and compassion for sinners, it is the soul that has scarcely known a single deliberate venial sin that opens her heart widest to the biggest sinner. There is no hardness and censoriousness in sanctity. The soul loves as her Lord loves. There is no hardness in her, the hard, unforgiving nature is a stranger to the love of God, whatever exterior piety may be there. The soul that loves can forgive any injury, she only pities and compassionates, and is more sorry for the sinner than for herself. She is never "down" on anybody. His pity, His

compassion, His love are the measure of hers, for He is in her, and so she forgives gladly and joyfully. The love of Christ cannot dwell in a heart that is given up to hardness. You remember the story of one of the first Christians on his way to martyrdom. He was met by a poor apostate imploring forgiveness, but he was hard and would not speak the word to the poor sinner who, with streaming eyes, followed to the place of execution. A fearful thing happened, his resolution to die vanished when he reached the spot, the poor apostate stepped forward and took his place, still imploring him to forgive, but no, he would not, so the crown passed from the one to the other, because love dies out when the heart refuses pity to a fellow-sinner.

If the Spirit dwells in our heart we shall only feel sorry and grieved, but never angry and unforgiving. One of the martyrs going to Tyburn was so flooded with joy and tender pity, that he embraced his betrayer because of the favour he had bestowed upon him, in enabling him thus to prove his love for his Lord; no word of reproach came, for that heart was filled with the love of God.

"We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren." Yes, the test of the presence in our heart of Divine Love is the love we bear to our fellow citizens in the Light. We love our enemies, or those who appear to be our enemies, we have no word for them but love, and above all, we love those who are of the King's household of the Faith.

We love all, no matter what their weaknesses and peculiarities may be; we have our share, too, although we may not think it, and so we shall have a tender pity for the weaknesses of others.

You love the little circle of Sisters here, because they are His friends, all trying to be what He wants them to be, and therefore a special bond of love and affection binds all together in Him. How can we love Him and despise His friends, it is impossible! No, our love must be big and generous, kind and forgiving, each loving and trying to help the other on to a greater and warmer love of Him Who is the one Love of all.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FRIENDS OF THE BRIDEGROOM

Now we have to say something about the Lord's friends. When two lovers come together, they quite naturally come in contact with their friends, they come to know the relatives, and of course, the Mother. And so it is with our Lord when we become one of His lovers, He introduces us to His friends and especially to His Mother.

Just as lovers are received as part of the family, so our Lord takes us into His family. We are not strangers but fellow-citizens and fellow-lovers with the saints on high, and so we are at once at home in the family circle of the Lord. And of course the Mother comes first, for how could it be otherwise; she is nighest His Heart, she stands out beyond all the others, as the Mother always does. She is the most wonderful of all His Saints, because the stain of sin never found place in her, she was filled with His wonderful grace from the first, and, just because she never knew sin, she is the only one out of all the Saints whose glorified body lifted up to partake of the spirit life, is already in Heaven. And she was very hidden on earth. How very little, after all, is she *en evidence?* There are just those wonderful moments, when, as a young child, she breaks forth into the splendid music of her Magnificat; she obtains the first miracle by her prayers at Cana, she does not even ask Him anything, she merely tells Him what is wanting, and with utter confidence says to the servants: "Whatsoever He says, do." She appears again at the foot of the Cross, sword-pierced in anguish and torment, only second to that of her Son. We see her waiting with the Apostles in that upper room for the great outpouring of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, and then, till she speeds to Heaven, her life is quite hidden. But once she had mounted up to the Throne of Light what a tremendous difference! Again and again she intervenes in the life of the Church of God. Her heart beats with sympathy and

pity for all the exiles of earth, and in what wonderful ways she intervenes to cheer and help. She ever shows a mother's heart and bears a mother's part in the life of the Church, from first to last.

See from those first far-off days, all through the ages, down to the last wondrous manifestations of her love at Lourdes, her tender care for Sister Teresa, or her compassion for the young Jew Ratisbonne, how she shows herself the Mother to all the children of her Son.

The Church is nothing if not supernatural. She is not surprised or astonished at the way the saints manifest their interest in her warfare here below, she would rather be surprised if they did not, she is frankly supernatural, entirely other worldly. She does not strive for a moment to minimise the astonishingly miraculous element in her life, she recognises facts just as she finds them, and does not try to explain them away. So many seem to think that this fighting Church on earth *is* the Church, but it is not so. By far the most important part of the Church is not here but up in Heaven, and then there is another part not quite so great, suffering in Purgatory. In the final triumph there will be only the Church Victorious, and when that great procession of all God's elect sweeps in through the gates, there will be no onlookers for all will be in it.

There is a communion between this world in which we live, and the mighty spirit world beyond; angels, saints and spirits of those departed are linked in a common bond of union. And the angels have appeared on earth and conversed with men throughout the ages, from those who spake with Abraham to those who have spoken to-day. They have all those wonderful powers of communication that I have mentioned. Sometimes they assume a material body, that they may appeal to our senses, sometimes they appear in our imagination, and sometimes they communicate by spirit impression in our intellect, the highest manifestation of all.

How wonderfully He has loved us. For each soul He has appointed a Guardian Angel to help her in her conflict with the powers of darkness, to warn, to inspire, encourage and shield her. To many souls the Guardian Angel has been visible throughout life, to others at frequent intervals

and in very crucial circumstances, as to St. Cecilia, St. Agnes, St. Francesca Romana and Gemma Galgani, to name a few.

The Angels are God's messengers, for that is the signification of their name, and they have been carrying God's messages to His children from of old; to the children of Israel, to Joshua, to Tobias, to Our Blessed Lady, to Joan of Arc, to an unnumbered multitude of Holy Souls in every time and place.

How close then is this world of spirit, more real than this world of sense which the average man thinks the sole reality.

There are Angels both good and bad, and both have equally appeared to men, but the evil Angels only appear to delude, deceive and drag souls down to hell, while the good Angels come to lift them up to the glory of Heaven. The evil Angels come only to destroy and sometimes they draw very near, they assail the soul with circumsession, that is, they surround her with temptations on every side; then they approach closer still by obsession, getting right up into the imagination, so that the soul almost perceives their touch and the cruel impelling force of their temptings; but they cannot enter into the citadel of the soul, unless the city is sold by treason from within. It is only then that there is incession, when the evil spirit enters and takes full possession and uses the body and its organs as his own, so that the soul, thus rendered powerless, dwells in her body like a prisoner in her cell. Alas! how many terrible cases of incession exist to-day, in which the Devil has usurped the full control of the body. He cannot thus enter a soul in the grace of God; however close he approaches without, he cannot come within. We remember how the evil spirits spoke to our Lord when they knew He was about to cast them out: "Hast Thou come hither to torment us before our time?" And so it is no wonder the Church uses the solemn office of exorcism to free, by the power of God's grace, those that are held captive in the power of the Devil. How easy the way to this fatal state we see every day; planchette writing and other simple things first, then come mediums and spirit communications, then, once the door is opened, the evil

spirits come through. Easy enough is their admittance, but how hard it is to eject them and close the door again; nothing less than the power of the spirit of God can do it.

But besides the Angels, there is the great throng of the Saints of God, those who have come through like conflicts as we, who have dwelt in like bodies, suffered the same temptations, been nourished by the same Sacraments, strengthened and confirmed by the same grace, and so battling, fighting and struggling, have come to the fadeless glory of the heavenly state. They are interested in us; how could it be otherwise when they know what the strife is like and the dangers we have to face? They look down with love and sympathy and plead for us before the Throne of our King and our Lover in Heaven. You cannot imagine St. Paul, with his fiery zeal for souls so flaming within him that he would be anathema that his brethren might be saved, indifferent to our struggles now he has received his crown.

Our Blessed Lady leads this glorious host, hers is the most perfect praise of His glory ever creature has or can give Him, and after her come all the Saints in due gradation, down to those sped but yesterday from the battlefield of earth to the peace of Heaven.

How wonderfully God is glorified in all His saints even on earth. What a bold assertion that seemed two thousand years ago when that young girl in Palestine uttered those astonishing words about herself: "All generations shall call me blessed," and yet how exactly through all time have they been fulfilled. And the Magdalene, snatched like a brand from the burning; see that wonderful moment, when, in the house of the poor Pharisee, with all his notions of propriety terribly shocked, she pours forth the precious ointment on her Lord and hears His most gracious words: "Wherever this Gospel is preached, this shall be told for a memorial of her." Just two instances; stainless sanctity and the woman that was a sinner; God draws his saints from the most opposite and unlooked-for quarters.

The saints of God are held in everlasting remembrance, although in their day they seem of far less consequence than the kings and emperors who fill the stage of life. Yet

it is the saints who are remembered while the great ones of earth are forgotten.

The saints are working miracles, appearing to this one, giving some special call to that, giving material health to one and spiritual health to another. At the most unforeseen times and in the most unexpected places the saints are at work and the world is surprised; yet surely it is far less surprising to find the saints concerned with the affairs of earth than if they shewed no concern at all?

One evening in January, 1918, I was going into the line near Ribecourt. We travelled up in those open trollies for hours, with a cutting east wind and a drizzle of rain. We reached Trescourt in a night of inky blackness, so intense that when hot tea was served out by the roadside, I had to feel for it in the darkness, although the man holding it was close beside me. I saw it would be very dangerous going up thus in the darkness, with the relieved troops and limbers racing down, regardless of anything and anybody, so I just said to Sister Teresa :* "Look here, Sister, if I'm to come out of this alive, you will have to be my eyes to-night." From the moment we started, a light shone from above my head showing everything for about a hundred yards in front of us. I could see our boys moving up and the others coming down and the lie of the road with perfect clearness. I looked up to see what it was, but saw nothing to explain it, but immediately my head was level the light showed again. This continued all the way till we reached Ribecourt, then we entered the communication trench, "Premi Avenue," as it was called, one of those zig-zag trenches very deep, and yet despite all, I saw the way quite clearly, and, when the "very lights" went up, instead of being blinded and unable to see when they went out, as is always the case, I saw just as if they had never appeared. And so this light continued till we entered our dug-out in "Kaiser Trench."

Again, in the big retreat in March, we were, after continuous fighting for many days, resting in Senlis, when the order came for us to go back and hold the line for twenty-four hours. I turned to Sister Teresa again and said: "Look here, Sister, you must take this company in the line and out again without a casualty." It was a quiet after-

* Sœur Thérèse of Lisieux.

noon, and as night fell we began forming up in the street, and then the shells came crashing into the town, tiles and fragments of brick and splinters flying in all directions. After what seemed an age, we got clear of the village and began moving across the open, but the shells followed us and drew ever closer and closer. Just as we reached the cross-roads I heard the rush of a 6in. Howitzer descending upon us; it seemed minutes, but it could not have been seconds, when with an awful crash, it struck the road close behind us. Stone and earth and fragments flew at us, small pieces rained off our steel helmets, I felt at least half the company must be knocked out, but no, "we are all right," not one had been touched. "The Lord has been good to us to-night," remarked the young American doctor at my side, and the old sergeant in front, "Well, that was a near thing!" We went on, held the line for the twenty-four hours, and came out again without a casualty.

I must relate one more instance of the little Sister's aid. It was at Froyennes, just before the Armistice. The greater part of the village was held by us, but some houses at the far end were still held by the enemy. Most of the civilians had left, except the Dominican Nuns, and they had been told to go. I went to them directly I reached the village, and was eagerly welcomed; they had been praying all day for a priest. I found them with their little bundles all tied up ready to move off when I entered. They were very loth to leave their home, although they had already had three shells in it, so I said to Mother Superior: "Well, Mother, you do not wish to leave?" "No," she answered. "Well," I said, "look here, stay where you are, I will place this house under Sister Teresa's protection, and you will not be touched again." I went into the chapel and gave them Benediction and then, promising to say Mass in the morning, went to the Trench Mortars Billet for dinner, where an English family was living who had dwelt there all through the war. Towards the end of dinner a very heavy artillery bombardment began, machine gun bullets began singing over the house and for nearly an hour the storm of shot and shell raged on. I could not help thinking the poor Sisters would not think much of Sister Teresa's protection. When things quietened down

a little, keeping under cover of the wall, I made my way back to our billet, where all the windows had been blown in by a shell. Early next morning I went to the Convent, and although shells had fallen all round, not one had touched it. A fairly heavy fire accompanied the Mass, and I had to wait some time before being able to leave the Convent. This continued for several days until the enemy guns were in action for the last time, but although the shelling on that occasion was very severe, the Convent was never touched.

These are only three instances out of a multitude in my own experience and that of others, just to show you that the friends of God are working and helping now, just as they have done in the days that are past.

The Saints reigning in Heaven hear our petitions and hasten to our help, and are ever ready to satisfy our sometimes, as I think, unreasonable demands. So you see the company of His friends and lovers into which our loving Lord has introduced us. The Saints are not less, but ten thousand times more interested in the affairs of time than when they were on earth.

Then we are linked again with those other friends of His, waiting the completion of their purgation in Purgatory. They are like the Saints and not like them; like them, in that their salvation is assured, but unlike them, in that their glory is delayed. Unlike again, because they need our prayers, which the Saints do not, and we can help them by our prayers, and God sometimes suffers them to come back to earth to ask of us the aid they need, by means of sensitive visions or by those other ways of which I have already spoken.

It is the way of lovers to share their friends, and so He deals with us. Strange that some outside the Church think His friends take away our love from Him, that, in fact, they get in the way. How different is the reality. Why if you live in the world, a friend of your lover is always welcome, you feel they are almost a part of himself; when they drop in you do not greet them with, "Get out, you come between myself and my lover." Of course not. Naturally, out of a circle of friends, some take more interest in us than others, and so it is with the Lord's

friends. Friendship springs up between earth and heaven, and people say: "Oh, the Saints have their favourites." I don't try to explain it, but it is quite true, there does exist between certain souls in this world and Saints in the next a quite familiar intimacy. After all the supernatural world does not contradict the natural.

Well, there is the great Bride of Christ in her triple frame, ever growing to the fulness of the stature of Christ, ever advancing to that great day, the Marriage of the Bridegroom with the Bride, which will herald in the glorious never-ending day of Eternity, where we shall everlastingly serve our King and Lover, ever filled, yet never satiated, with the torrent of His Exhaustless Love.

CHAPTER XVIII

TEMPTATION FROM THE WORLD, THE FLESH, AND THE DEVIL

In warfare it is supremely important to take account of the strength and possible dispositions of the enemy, and the General who made his plans, only taking into account the strength of his own forces, and neglecting those of his foe, would be acting very foolishly and courting disaster.

As that is true in the natural order, so is it true in the supernatural, where "our warfare is not with flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and the spirits of wickedness in high places," so that while we have God and His grace on the one hand, we have also the Devil and his temptations on the other, and we have to remember that the Devil is as real as Almighty God is real.

Our way would be astonishingly easy but for the Devil.

We have followed the soul in her ascent to God, and while we have shown all the supernatural graces God bestows, we have hinted, too, at a little of the dangers of the way. We have now to consider her spiritual foes, their dispositions and places of attack, for if these are well studied, she will be the better prepared for the conflict. We have enlisted, not for three years, but for duration, and the duration of the war in which we are engaged is for all our life, the conflict will only cease with our last breath. There may be times when we are like the troops in France, out in rest, but we shall be back in the line again, as they were. There will be intervals of quiet, when the Devil is very silent, and you almost think he has retired, until he opens fire again just when you are least expecting it.

Now our ghostly enemy has three lines of attack; first through the world, next through our own flesh, and finally through himself, and, for the most souls, he finds the two first lines amply sufficient to attain his purpose, without the trouble of appearing in person.

His first attack comes through the world, not the beautiful world of nature, the land, sea, and sky, but the world of this darkness, the world-spirit that would fasten the eyes of the soul entirely on the passing things of sense and turn them away from God to seek her satisfaction in them. That is the world that St. John says lieth in the arms of the wicked one. And the world-spirit is the very antithesis of the spirit of Christ. He says: "Blessed are the poor." The world says: "Blessed are the rich," and it can see nothing in poverty save something to be evaded at any cost. Again: "Blessed are the meek and humble of heart." The world says: "By no means, blessed are the powerful and successful, push your own claims to attention and notice, for no one else is going to do it for you." The world only looks on the humble man as a pitiful fool, who has not got sense enough to fight and struggle for his own.

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness." The only righteousness the world has room for is success, be successful and you must be righteous, be a failure and you must be wrong, a successful rebel is a patriot, an unsuccessful one a traitor.

"Blessed are the pure in heart." The world has not even a conception of such a possibility, it says "Satisfy your natural desires to the full, provided you do not make a public scandal about it," for the world will ask no awkward questions as to how you gained your wealth or what your morals are, provided you conform to its standard. As for supernatural things, the world has no use for them, and indeed understands as little of the language of the kingdom of heaven as most of the men who went to France did of French.

But the world is very real, very evident, very tangible, the very atmosphere throbs with its arrogant assertive power. True its spirit was a little subdued during the war, but the guns were scarcely silent ere it arose more overbearing, more aggressive than before. The world offers something real and tangible here and now, it offers to satisfy to the full the sensitive side of man, and as to his soul, that can very well wait. "Young man rejoice in your youth. Drink the cup of pleasure that is pressed into your hands. Enjoy life, satisfy your nature, make sure of this world, and

let the other take its chance." The passion for pleasure was never so strong as to-day. People want a new theatre, a new dance, a new game every night. Why in the old days you went up to a theatre once in six months as a great event, to which for three months you looked forward and on which, during the other three, you looked back. But now you see boys and girls bored by going night after night to this place and that, and deriving little satisfaction from it all.

The spirit of the world is that which is so fastened on material things and the satisfaction of the senses, that it pays no heed to God and the things of eternity. This world-spirit creeps in everywhere. It finds its home even in the Church, for it is quite willing to pay its respects to religion in a way, but it must be a religion that will not offend anyone, with just a polite acknowledgment of Almighty God, such as you would give to a distant acquaintance in the street.

And the world-spirit finds its way even into the cloister, for non-possession does not necessarily mean poverty, nor possession riches. You can find the unworldly spirit in the jewelled palace, and the world-spirit in the cottage. The spirit of pride can push its way even through three grilles, if you have them, for there has been no enclosure yet devised that can quite keep it out. It is quite true that in the cloister the mere material delights of the world are wanting, but the spirit of the world can enter there, and when you meet a proud religious—and there are such—you know it is there. Bossuet said of the Port Royalists that he found them pure as angels and proud as devils, and there lay the reason of their fall. Why was it that at the Reformation so many religious houses fell with such astonishing ease and that so few stood forth to stem the flood? *Not* because they were sinks of iniquity, as some pretend, but because the world-spirit had got in, and in many cases they were only collections of eminently respectable people, engaged in literary and scientific pursuits. They had lost their supernatural side, it had become gradually sapped and enfeebled, until they had descended to the purely natural level, so that when it became a question of being hung up by the neck on the gallows, cut down,

ripped open and the heart torn out, they were not able to rise up to the height such sacrifice demanded, and they took a pension instead.

The Devil cares not a straw how he gains his end, so that he gains it; he has no objection to a religious community if it is infected by a worldly spirit, for in that case it is rather an ally than a foe. And strange though it may seem, even the soul that is advancing along supernatural ways, feels the intense pull of this world-spirit at times. It appears in such attractive guise, so big in its sweep, so very real, and there are moments when the world of spirits seems so far off and so unreal, in the presence of this great world-spirit with its voice ever insistent on the *now*. Why renounce everything? Why refuse to satisfy the nature God has given you? Why not take all the pleasure and joy of life while you may? Why sacrifice a present good for a future all unknown? The glory and glitter of this poor world, how real in such moments they seem! And yet the world says nothing of the broken wrecks that it casts up on the shore, the lives shattered, the eyes dulled, and senses blurred, and even reason broken in the rush for that which seems so delightful for the moment, but the end whereof is death.

Sometimes we feel a shock when we see the fall of one who seemed as a star in the firmament of the Church, but that is because the processes that produced the fall have been unseen, the world-spirit has gradually sapped away all the supernatural life until there was nothing left, and then the spiritual house fell, and great was the fall of it.

No wonder then that our Blessed Lord warns us to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation, and so watch that the prince of this world may find nothing in us.

We have to keep out the world-spirit, and see that it finds no admittance within the cloister of our hearts. We are supernatural and other worldly, or the most ghastly failure out.

It may seem strange to speak of a world-spirit in religion, and yet again and again it does get in, the worldly way of looking at and judging men and things, the spirit of pride which sometimes asserts itself in most surprising ways.

You sometimes meet with religious who seem determined to impress upon you that their Community is "IT," with capital letters, in the social and worldly sense of the word. The great congregation of St. Maur, in France, found the fame of its learning a snare, for study and literature became so all important that numbers of monks were dispensed from Choir Office that their literary labours might not be interrupted. What an instance of the accidental supplanting the essential!

Then the next line of attack is through our own flesh, which we know is very weak, the unhappy legacy of original sin.

And our health. How many a vocation has been wrecked by needless fretting and fussing about this wretched house of clay, that in a few years will be rotting in the grave. There is no way in which the Devil is so successful as this. He can persuade people they have every conceivable malady, when there is nothing whatever the matter with them, and, of all maladies, the one that has no existence in fact is the hardest to cure. After all, if a religious breaks her leg or head, there is a definite cure to be accomplished, but once these imaginary sicknesses enter, there is no hope of a remedy.

I knew a priest doing excellent work who became obsessed with this idea of his health. At one place the air was too strong, at another not strong enough; one place was too relaxing, another not relaxing enough; and so he journeys and I suppose will so continue to do until the end, and all the excellent work he might do is left undone. But you never can tell, until you are put to it, what this frail body of ours can bear. The trenches were a wonderful cure for most things, and a No. 9 cured anything from a broken leg to a headache. They did not talk of the simple life, but lived it. The food was often rough and well seasoned with mud, but nobody died on that account. Most of the people languishing in the Spas would be perfectly cured by a month in the trenches, especially with a good shower of shells to strengthen their nerves.

It is wonderful what concern the Devil shows for our health. "This life is far too severe for you, the hours too long, the strain too great, the penances too hard; you must

be careful, it is not right to injure the body God has given you ''—and the Devil's best advocates are good people who echo his words.

While he is full of concern for our body, how fearfully little he shows for our souls. How rarely you hear anyone say : "You must not injure your soul." The best cure for all this is hard work, and then you will be so occupied you will not have time to think of your ills : "If one will not labour neither shall he eat," is the excellent advice of the great Apostle.

Early morning is a favourite time with the Devil. You really are too exhausted to get up, you will be fit for nothing all day, a little more slumber, a little more sleep.

It is surprising, too, in religion, how quite secondary things, that in the world had no attraction, seem to have a tremendous power; as one said to me : "Why, in the world, I never troubled or gave a thought to food, and now it's always coming on." So we must watch the way against the flesh, stop the eyes from roving, and ears from listening, mortify our sense of taste and touch and smell.

There is a third way in which the enemy comes, when it is a case of conflict of spirit against spirit, and he comes to the attack with all his own cruel malignity.

These temptations are altogether unlike any other. They strike the soul with the stunning effect of a blow; or it is a cruel compelling voice, harsh, metallic, Satanic, that seems to speak in the very soul. A soul once, under this attack, rushed from the house into the open-air in a vain desire to escape its horrid persistency. Another was so overcome with horror as to be unable to speak or coherently relate what had happened.

There are moments when the soul seems absolutely willless amidst the fierce onset of temptation, or sometimes it is a series of blows, as if endeavouring to battle down the soul's defence by force, like a barrage of artillery striving to level a village. So the Devil seems all around and close up to the soul, right into the imagination where he presents his temptations with such awful vividness as almost to deprive the soul of her senses.

Sometimes it is directly at Faith that he levels all his powers. All the real things, that we thought it impossible

we ever could doubt at all, seem to be as though they were not; the experience of our soul, in which we know we have seen the things of the spirit, seem to fade as a dream, and we wonder if it really happened at all. All the future to which we look seems an empty void, and the Devil with his mocking voice says that it is all a fancy, all a delusion of our own imagination. In a storm like this, the last thing in the world is to reason, the only answer of the soul is: "I believe all God has revealed and all His Church teaches," only so can the Devil be put to flight.

Or he assails the soul with horrible temptations against chastity, painted in the imagination with terrifying vividness, so fearful, so persistent, that the soul is pierced with unutterable terror, fearing she has consented to the hateful visions presented to her. I have known souls to fall senseless in the cruel onslaught of temptations to sin that they loathed with all the strength of their being. But unless the temptation was tremendously vivid and overmastering, it would be really no temptation at all.

The Devil is ever changing his tactics. At one time he tries to bear everything down by the might of one terrific onslaught, at another it is by slow, continuous, persevering battering that he strives to break his way through. And the more advanced the soul in the mystical way, the more intensely spirit-like are these attacks, because it is not now a conflict of world or flesh against spirit, but of our spirit against his. The soul in these fearful visitations experiences the horror of a darkness that may be felt, a fear it cannot express, that seems to paralyse all its powers.

Then he comes with other temptations, less gross than these, but more subtle, by which he tries to persuade the soul to pride in the graces she has received, to think she is really of great consequence, and to give to herself the glory that belongs to God alone. "If thou hast received, why glory as if thou hast not received," says St. Paul, and that is the way every temptation to spiritual pride must be met.

Then again he will try to persuade a soul that she is not understood, not appreciated, or that she should be in a stricter way of life, practice great austerities; and she may be led far by the evil spirit, unless very watchful against his devices, before she perceives it, for he comes both as an

angel of light as well as a roaring lion, and indeed he is less to be feared in the last case than in the first.

Again he will endeavour to make her very critical and censorious of the doings of others, harsh and condemnatory, domineering and overbearing, so that all her sweetness and gentleness disappear from her own soul, and the souls of others are wounded and injured to an extent of which, in the blindness he has cast over her, she has no conception.

What terrible falls we sometimes see, those who have been nourished with the Bread of Life, feeding their unhappy souls with the husks of swine. How did it happen? It seems so unthinkable, yet so it is; it is true, and it is true because that soul was undermined by pride and secret craft of the Devil long before the crash came. There is no virtue the Devil hates so much as humility, because he knows that if he can destroy this, everything else is possible. A soul that really knows herself will never be harsh or censorious in her judgment of others, for she knows only too well what she would be but for His helping grace.

It is just because earth is a battlefield on which grace and temptation are contending for the mastery, that we see such amazing contradictions in the same person; sometimes grace has the best of it, and at other times temptation has the best of it.

The world is made up of people who vary in every possible way, from those souls on the extreme right, who, having attained union with God, scarcely if ever so much as vary a hair's breadth from His will, to those on the extreme left, who are so possessed by the Devil that they scarcely ever vary from his, and between these two extremes they shade off to the centre, where grace and temptation seem equally matched in the contest. There is the solution of those amazing contrasts in the same soul, absorbed in prayer one day and the next letting out a torrent of blasphemy. "What a hypocrite," you say. No, it is not that; it is simply that at one time God and His grace are in possession, and at the other the Devil and his temptations. I saw a review of a book on Mystical Theology the other day which said: "The best part about it is that there is nothing about the Devil in it." Well, it seems to me that it was the worst part about it, for a

General is only a fool who refuses to prepare for his foe. We must take account of the enemy of our salvation, or we shall fare badly. St. Paul, rapt up into the third heaven where he heard things not lawful for man to utter, when he came to earth again was assailed with a most horrible and malignant temptation of which he says : " Thrice I besought the Lord that it might depart from me," our Lord did not free him from it, but gave grace to overcome it. Yet in the fierce horror of these struggles he cries out " Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? "

I remember once impressing on a dear child the reality of the Devil, when she exclaimed : " O, Father, I know he's real right enough, I haven't the least doubt about that." She knew what temptation was.

Our Lord says " Pray, but also watch." The troops in the line had to listen to catch any sound of enemy movements, so also must we. Our nature is weak, the Devil is strong, only grace can help us to come through ; so never give way to over-confidence. A temptation may leave you for years and you may feel it may never return, or that if it does, it will be no temptation at all, and yet after long intervals it comes back with tenfold greater strength than before. We can never get rid of temptation because we can never get rid of the Devil, but we can overcome by the help of that grace that will never be wanting. Remember the words of our Lord and Lover : " What I say unto one I say unto all—*watch.*"

CHAPTER XIX

MYSTICAL SUBSTITUTION

Of all the extraordinary mysteries of the supernatural life, none is quite so extraordinary and quite so mysterious as that Mystical Substitution by which God calls some souls to share with Him in His great work of Redemption.

What erroneous notions people form of God! How often they conceive of Him as one who rather terrifies by His anger than heals by His mercy, as if He was ever ready to come down on our faults and failings, and pay no heed to our strivings and endeavours to serve Him! He is not in the least like that, and we might so easily know it from ourselves, for should we be "down" on anyone who had been doing his best for us, and yet had sadly muddled the whole affair?

As the soul comes to be better acquainted with Him, and from a stranger becomes one of His intimate lovers, He takes her up into the secrets of His Divine heart and shares them with her. He always takes the first step in this Divine intimacy, for we should be too fearful of our miserable nothingness to dare attempt it. "You have not chosen Me, but I *have* chosen you."

With this drawing of the soul to His heart, He begins to unfold the joys and the sorrows of that Heart of His that loves with such incomprehensible pity and tenderness, and this unfolding is reserved for His intimate friends, just as the secrets of precious things are reserved by lovers for each other and not spoken of to others.

In His wonderful way, He calls some souls to have share with Him in the sorrows of His Divine heart, and lifts them up in a mysterious manner to a participation with Himself in His work of Redemption; they are made co-workers together with Him in a way that is only conceivable when we are mindful of that extraordinary union with Himself by

which He both works and suffers in them. That is the favour He reserves for His intimate lovers.

St. Paul, with extraordinary boldness, has declared for all time the doctrine concerning this most amazing union of the soul with her Saviour in His Divine work of Redemption. "I fill up in my own body what is wanting in the Passion of Christ"—not for a moment that anything can be wanting in the abundance of its infinite satisfaction, seeing that a single drop of His Blood was abundantly sufficient to take away the sin of all the world, but that, in a mysterious and wonderful way the members of His mystical body should suffer with the Head. Hence He calls for Victims in whom He, the Divine Victim, may suffer, for unless He suffered in them, all their sufferings would be nothing worth.

To understand this we must look at the Saviour's redemptive work. He was substituted for us and suffered death in our stead: "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." In His Own Divine Self He there endured the penalty of every sin that has or shall be committed, as long as time shall be. He who knew no sin was made sin for us, and expiated in His own Body on the tree all the guilt of all the world.

And He wills to associate some souls in a mysterious way in this work. We can only in part explain it by the fact that the Sacrifice of Calvary is one Eternal Act, and that, just as in the Blessed Sacrament it is the self-same Lord and the self-same sacrifice, not another, so when He suffers in His Victims, it is not a new sacrifice, not a new expiation, but the same expiation of Calvary, only seemingly new, owing to our vision being limited by the boundary of time.

At intervals in the life of the Church His Bride He has called and chosen certain souls to be His Victims of expiation, in whom He wills to be glorified by conforming them to the express image of His likeness in the way of Mystical Substitution.

St. Catherine of Siena is a case in point, and indeed the sufferings she endured, when she offered herself a Victim in that awful crisis through which the Church was passing, seem so extraordinary and so inconceivable, that it is only when we realize that it was indeed her Lord suffering in her that

we can understand the mystery a little. In one of her last letters to Raymond of Capua, after narrating her sufferings, she concludes: "In this way and many others which I cannot tell, my life is consumed and shed for this dear Bride; I by this road, and the glorious martyrs with blood. . . this time I am to confirm them with a new martyrdom in the sweetness of my soul—that is for His Holy Church; then perhaps He will make me rise again with Him. He will so put an end to my miseries and my crucified desires."

Now you will say, how far can you go in the way of Mystical Substitution? Is there any limit beyond which we may not pass, in this strange mysterious way of substituted suffering? Well, for the salvation of a soul we may offer our bodily life in exchange for the spiritual life of the one for whom we offer ourselves, and the same is true of more than one. We can offer the years of our life, the agonies and the pains He may lay upon us to obtain the redemption of souls. That is the full limit to which we can go. Our King Himself has set the limit: "Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend."

So, in an altogether incomprehensible way, by corporal death spiritual life is bestowed, as St. Paul says: "So death worketh in us, but life in you," that is, by our bodily death spiritual life is given to you.

There is a lesser way, in which we can be substituted for another, by taking on ourselves the temptations that should fall upon them, with this exception, that if the temptations are of like nature to those to which we are already subject, it is not lawful in any case to do so, owing to the danger to ourselves and also because it is not His will that we should do so. Moreover, as this life of substitution is one that in any case must be attended with the most terrific sufferings and extraordinary dangers, no soul should embrace such a work without the clearest and most manifest call of the Saviour for her to do so, in no case without the approval of her spiritual director, and, in the case of religious, without the permission of their Superiors.

The ever-growing call of the Lord to this Victim-life in these last days may indicate that the Mystical Crucifixion

of the Bride is drawing nigh, and that in consequence the number of those whom He would conform to Himself in His suffering life must increase.

Amongst these there is one in whom we may study this Victim-life very clearly, Gemma Galgani of Lucca, for there we see a soul called from earliest childhood to this way of Mystical Substitution. See her giving so many years of her life for the salvation of this soul, and so many for that; her whole being was consumed by a burning thirst for the salvation of souls. Her Lord's interests, His Divine work so filled and absorbed her, that her mind never turned to ought else, so that when He called her for the final and most mysterious substituting act of her life, He found her ready. He appeared to her and revealed the awful horror that had invaded the very Sanctuary; her whole soul quivered and shook with terror and trembling, as all the fearful consequences of what He asked became known to her, but her brave soul triumphed over human weakness: "Yes, Lord," she cried, "take me for Your Victim." And henceforth, for the remaining two and a half years of her life, she was indeed a victim to the full. All the anguish and agony of her Saviour's Passion was reproduced in her, she was tormented in body, tormented in soul, drank the chalice of dereliction and tasted all the bitterness of the great abandonment of the Cross. Shrouded in awful darkness like her Lord, she was left to tread the wine press alone, forlorn, and in unutterable desolation, yet clinging to the Lord, her Lover to the last. Her director in Rome would have hastened to her side, indeed the telegram had been prepared, but she would not ask for that consolation, she would seek no alleviation, but die like her Lord. The last moment came; supported by the two girls who had been with her through her agony, like her Lord on the Cross, she inclined her head and, uttering the words: "Jesus, I can do no more," finished her Victim-life on earth.

What a tremendous mystery is here, this participation in the chalice of the Lord! He does not compel us to be Victims, no, He calls us to be Victims. "Can you drink of the chalice that I shall drink of?" is the question He puts to those whom He thus favours by His call, and if the soul answer: "Yes, Lord," He responds: "You shall

indeed drink of the chalice that I shall drink of," for that chalice was the torment of the Cross.

So like to Himself does He fashion His Victim-brides, that even the wound marks are sometimes impressed on the mortal body through the overflow of anguish that fills the soul, for she is so penetrated with His Passion, that His agony and wounds have passed, as it were, into her very self, or rather she has passed into Him.

And so He is calling for victims who will hold nothing back, who are ready to go all the way with Him, along the dark and desolate pathway that leads to crucifixion.

At first sight there is something terrifying in the very thought. Flesh and blood shrink back appalled at the prospect, for it seems so utterly impossible ; and so in truth it is for nature, unless upheld by Divine power, unless He Himself within uphold the soul in her anguish.

There are pangs of agony and sorrow in our heart sometimes that we can only share with one who is very intimate, and so to say, the counterpart of ourself, and such a one enters into the agony of our heart and indeed suffers with us, for the pain that pierces the one afflicts the other. Thus it is with those souls to whom the Saviour opens in full measure the mystery of Calvary ; that mystery is reproduced in them.

The agony of soul in the passive purgation of spirit, tremendous though it be, cannot be compared with the agony in this drinking of the chalice of Calvary. The soul may shrink back as the Soul of the Saviour in the Garden and cry "If it be possible let this chalice pass from me : " but she must likewise say with Him : "Not my will but Thine be done." The will of God is the summing up of everything. This agony is not for all ; this amazing, mysterious entering into the agony of the Cross is for those of whom the Saviour said : " He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."

How bitter is the drinking of this chalice ! Yet it is Love Divine that offers it to our lips. He calls, and He calls because He loves with a special love, and this call is the mark and seal of that special love by which He wills so to liken us to Himself. St. Paul is ever insisting on this great mystery, ever tracing this death that brings life ; how

strange it is that life only springs from death. Suffering and glory, life and death, so the Apostle is ever contrasting the two and drawing out the features of our mystical immolation, our mystical crucifixion with our King.

Love is the sum of it all, the soul that is chosen for this work becomes like her Lord and Lover, a burning flame of fire for the salvation of souls, His interests have become hers, the souls He loves she loves, the souls He agonizes for so also does she, or rather He comes and burns and agonizes and suffers in her, in this wonderful, inexpressible way, as the form of Consecration of the Victims lately approved by the Church expresses it: "Come Lord, and suffer Thyself in me."[1] The one interest of Our Lord is the salvation of the human race, and so the Victim-soul is so penetrated with this same desire, that if it were possible, and she possessed a life for each soul, she would lay down each one to obtain their salvation, so intensely burns the Divine fire within her. She is consumed with a burning thirst for souls that can never be quenched until her Victim-life is finished, and, like her Lord, she dies in anguish unutterable and desolation inconceivable on the Cross.

This is that supreme forming to the image of the Saviour in His suffering which He wills to bestow on those whom He calls. "If we have been planted in the likeness of His death, we shall also be planted in the likeness of His resurrection."

This is the sign of His greatest favour, for what can He grant a soul greater than to be thus likened to Himself and to share with Him in the most Divine work, the redemption of souls? "Except the grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it shall bring forth much fruit." These grains of wheat are the Victim-souls who, by dying, bring forth much fruit, for they are the souls in whom the Divine Victim, in such marvellous ways, manifests the agony of His Passion, and through whom He gives life to those who are perishing. The work is all His, He living and agonizing and suffering in them, for without Him their suffering could profit nothing, but to Victim-souls, one with the Supreme Victim, living His life as the branch lives by the vine, all things are possible.

[1] *Associazione delle Vittime per la Santa Chiesa.* See Appendix at end.

And of course they are the special object of the Devil's hate, and he comes with all his malignant spite to afflict them in their agony, and to spoil the completeness of their sacrifice, indeed, to stay their embracing it at all. All the night before her consecration, one soul was tormented by the Devil, bringing every reason he could against the act, assailing her, so that long after she said with a shudder of intense horror: "How can I ever forget that night, it seemed the devil would never leave me."

But the Victim is also the Bride. In a very special way the Lord is her Lover and His choice of her for the Victim-state is the most precious pledge of His Love, the black dereliction which she suffers the proof of it and of His acceptance of her offering. She drinks the chalice of the agony of the great forsakening, cries with her Lord in that awful abandonment: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" and she seems forsaken, and indeed feels she must be forsaken for ever, and that from the darkness of earth she must pass to a greater darkness still, since, unless she experienced this, how could she drink the chalice that He drank of, and how co-operate and become a worker together with Him in the Redemption of the world?

Such is the way of Mystical Substitution, by which souls are formed to the likeness of their Saviour in this most sublime and wonderful manner, and if they are thus conformed to the image of His agony on earth, they will likewise be conformed to the likeness of His glory in heaven.

CHAPTER XX

THE RELIGIOUS STATE

When the young man in the Gospel came to our Lord with the question: "What good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?" our Lord turned to him and said: "If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments." And the young man replied: "All these I have kept from my youth up, what lack I yet?" And our Lord, beholding him, loved him, for He saw the young man possessed great qualities, and He met him with the words: "If thou wilt be perfect, sell all thou hast and come, follow Me, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven." The young man turned sorrowfully away, because he had great possessions.

As it was thus long ago, so it is now. Many look at the religious state, admire it, long for the peace of it, desire the beauty of it, but they go away, for they cannot make the sacrifice. The religious life implies a very complete sacrifice and demands a very complete renunciation. That life is summed up in the three-fold Vows—Poverty, by which we renounce all things external to ourself; Chastity, by which we renounce the power we have over our own body; and Obedience, by which we renounce our own wills, and hence renounce ourselves. We have only to look at the effects of these three Vows to understand how utter and how complete is the renunciation which the religious life exacts. Moreover, it is a permanent renunciation, not for five or six or ten years, but for life. When we become the regular soldiers of the king, it is to fight in his army till death.

Again, the religious life is a common life, that is, a life lived together, and that means a great grace, for the common life rubs all the awkward corners off people, and prevents the development of eccentricity. Generals in the Army often become eccentric, for there is no one to pull up a General. The young officers soon get cured of any

tendency to eccentricity, because they all live in common; there is a great safety in the common life.

Now we do not enter religion to please ourselves and have our own way: that is the very last thing we come for. The religious life is the consecration of our whole being to the service of our King and Lover. The Vows we make are made to Him, and by them we promise to be true to Him till death. The religious life is supernatural or it is nothing; there is no mean, you cannot be half natural and half supernatural. The religious is either the most splendid success or the most unutterable failure, and which it is to be will depend on whether the soul proves true or false to the supernatural state to which she is called. I can conceive nothing more intolerable than a religious leading a merely natural life.

The religious state falls into two main divisions; the cloistered or contemplative Orders, and the uncloistered or active Orders. The world has little understanding of and less patience with the religious life under any aspect, but it may strain a point in favour of the Sister of Charity, because, as it says: "she is engaged on something 'useful,'" although she goes a queer way about it. But for the contemplatives it has nothing but scorn; they are so useless, what in the world do they want to shut themselves up for, especially when they might have been so useful in the world, and when the coronet is exchanged for the veil, the world can only think of some mental abberation as the explanation of the altogether impossible occurrence.

It raises the cry that was uttered long ago: "to what purpose is this waste?" For to the eyes of the world this hidden life of prayer, penance and praise seems both useless and wasteful. God does not want such sacrifices as these. Of course, it will admit grudgingly, some sacrifice may be necessary, but not this total immolation of everything.

But the part of the contemplative has been taken up by the Lord Himself, and He has given His Divine answer in those unforgettable words: "Mary hath chosen the better part which shall not be taken from her." There is no restraining the power of prayer, it reaches out every-

where; that prayer rising from the religious in the solitude of her cell, or in the silence before the tabernacle, is reaching out over the earth carrying graces hither and thither, converting sinners and perfecting saints, entering where the doors are fast barred to all active intervention, it makes its way, softens hearts long hardened, brings tears of repentance to eyes long dry, comforts the sad, strengthens the weak, confirms the wavering, heartens the strong; there is no measuring of its influence, as there is no restraining of its power.

That is the contemplative life, no narrow life as the world conceives it, but one wide as the love of God, for the contemplative is there to plead for all, saints and sinners, excluding none and embracing all in the fiery love for God's glory which is ever burning in her heart. See how the Lord Himself has set His seal on the hidden life of contemplation, when of the three and thirty years of His earthly life thirty were spent hidden and unknown in the silence of Nazareth. True, the contemplative never sees the fruit of her work, or very rarely, for the harvesting of it she must wait for Heaven. On the other hand the active worker often has this joy of seeing the fruit of her labour and beholding the sinner, in actual fact, returning to the Saviour. But whether she sees the fruit or not is little matter; she knows that the Lord has promised that the labour shall not be in vain that she labours in the Lord, and above all she has His assurance that she shall: "go and bring forth fruit, and that her fruit shall remain."

The soul who would consecrate herself to God must leave everything—home, father, mother, brother, sister, lands, wealth, possessions—at His call, like men did at that call to battle seven years ago, when they left all to defend their fatherland, never even hoping to see the faces so loved and the land so dear again, crossing the seas to embrace a life of such hardship and suffering as they had never, even in their wildest dreams, conceived as possible, finally dying there in a strange land, where they lie in their thousands beneath the little white cross.

There is a remarkable likeness between the Army and Religion. Both demand very complete sacrifice and very absolute obedience, but they are also widely different, as

their ends are different. The sacrifice Religion demands and the obedience it exacts is of a far more difficult kind than that of the Army. The Army is satisfied with external obedience, Religion demands the interior obedience of the heart; and while the Army demands the leaving of all for a time, Religion demands the leaving of all for ever.

When our Lord gives the call to leave all and follow Him in the way of the Counsels, He asks for the whole, not a part, not three-quarters or nine-tenths, but ALL. It is only by this giving of the whole that the oblation is complete.

And He Himself gives the call, no one can call himself. It is He, speaking in the heart, Whose Voice the soul hears: "Come, follow Me," as He passed through the cities of Palestine long ages ago, calling here one and there another, so it is now, Jesus of Nazareth is still passing by and His Voice is still calling, and souls are still answering to His call, leaving all that life holds precious, that they may spend and be spent for Him alone.

And it is surprising to see whom He calls and whom He does not. Very often, those He calls are the very last in the world that we should ever expect. The brilliant actress in the gay world of Paris is the idol of the multitude one day, and the next comes the astounding news that she has forsaken the place of her former triumph to enter Carmel. How unforeseen and unexpected! That's exactly what is always happening. He called the most unexpected people, when He was on earth, and sadly shocked the pious people of the day by His choice. And we see the same scenes enacted to-day, the same shock of pained surprise on the faces of the sober religious folk, when He calls one apparently so utterly unfitted for the cloister; indeed, they are as indignant at His choice as the Pharisees were at His calling Matthew the Publican, and inclined to say: "Why could He not choose someone more respectable and better suited for the work?" The surprises of earth are very great, but they are nothing compared to the surprises that await us in Heaven.

Well now, just let us look at these three Vows for a moment.

Poverty is not of much account to-day. To be poor is a crime or very nearly so: if you "haven't got on, why not? It must be your own fault." You are simply an obstacle in the way of progress, so "just get out of the way." Your business is to become rich by any means you may, and, provided you become so, the world will not inquire too exactly how you came by it; but get rich by all means, honestly, if you can, and by any other means, if you can't.

Some years ago, one of the new rich came to a friend of mine and wanted to get into Society; she was ready with a thousand pounds for the introduction. My friend, of course, refused, but as the lady went away she said: "I shall get in somehow," and so she did.

The world may, to a certain extent, understand involuntary poverty, brought about by misfortune or failure; it is a most unpleasant fact and the unfortunate victim must be promptly dropped, yet it is at least understandable; but for anyone with possessions to give them up and deliberately to choose a life of poverty in which they do not possess the least thing, can only be explained as incipient insanity. Voluntary poverty contradicts one of the world's most cherished beatitudes and arouses all its hostility, as our Lord intended that it should. It arouses hostility even amongst Catholics infected by the world-spirit, who resent the sudden disturbance of all their ideas. However, they get over the shock as best they may, and try to forget that that particular person was ever in their circle at all.

Poverty in Religion is very absolute, since the religious possesses nothing of her own; everything she has is not for her possession but for her use; it is "ours" and not "mine"—our cell, our books, not my cell and my books—in order utterly to root out the very idea of possessing anything. You must go to the Superior, even if you want so much as a stamp for a letter. To the world it appears a wretched slavery, whereas in reality it is a blessed liberty, the liberty of the children of God, the "possessing nothing yet possessing all things" of St. Paul.

It is extraordinary what cares riches bring. The millionaire is always on the verge of starvation, or thinks he is; then he is tormented with anxieties as to his

securities, whether his investments will rise or fall, whether he shall hold or sell. The bank may fail, thieves may break through and steal, a revolution may dispossess him of all he has. What a world of trouble the world's beatitude brings after all.

Now if you possess absolutely nothing, you cannot be in much fear of losing it, or filled with anxiety about guarding it. Thus, by the Vow of Poverty, you can serve the Lord without the entanglement of earthly things to spoil your service. He, though He was rich in the splendid glory of Heaven, yet for our sakes became poor that we might be made rich. Utter poverty is our true riches, since then we are most like Him.

The spirit of poverty means the desire to do without things, even though they might seem to be necessary. Little Sister Teresa had a pretty jug in her cell, and one day found it exchanged for a very old ugly one. Instead of complaining, she thanked our Lord for the opportunity of practising the love of poverty more completely.

We must jealously keep the spirit of poverty, never have in our cell anything save that which necessity requires. It is strange how some tend to gather all sorts of odd things in their cells and that is why there is an occasional examination of the cell to see that regular observance is being kept. There was an inspection, too, in the Army, everything laid out so that the officer could see what every man had; not that there was any tendency to accumulate things, when you had to carry them all on your back, but this examination was to see that each man had all that he should, for the tendency there was to lighten the load even of necessary things. Well, perhaps if religious had to carry all the things for their use on their backs, there would be a like tendency, certainly there would be no desire to accumulate.

Now we must guard against any little trifle spoiling the completeness of the sacrifice. How surprising it is to find Religious, after having made the great sacrifice, clinging to some insignificant trifle—a small book or some religious object with which they are unwilling to part. If you have an affection for anything of that sort, get rid of it at once, and you will feel all the happier for being free of it.

A Trappist Father out at *Tre Fontane,* said to me: "All our Fathers die very happily, because they have absolutely nothing to leave behind them." At a certain convent, a good Father giving the retreat, had just finished a most eloquent address on detachment, when he asked one of the Sisters to fetch his Breviary which he had left behind. When she took it up, it was so filled with holy pictures that it refused to close: "that spoilt all the effect of the sermon for me," said the Sister. It is not sufficient merely not to have things, but we must not desire to have them; it would be to little purpose to leave the world for the cloister, if the desire of the heart is yet set on material things, for true poverty of spirit consists not only in the entire renunciation of all possessions, but in the abandonment of all desire for them. By this Vow of Poverty, we take the first step in freeing ourselves from all external things and turning all our affections from them that we may belong to God alone.

As by Poverty we surrender all external goods for love of our King, so by Chastity we surrender all the right we have over our mortal body for love of Him. It means the greatest renunciation of all, of home and the family life; there is no sacrifice that can quite compare with that. The married state is a Sacrament and there is a joy incomparable in the home life, like to nothing else in all the world; and the soul, with full knowledge of all it involves, leaves it all, because she has heard Him calling and she has answered: "I come."

First of all, the Vow of Chastity involves the renunciation of the married state, and then it means more, it demands perfect Chastity and Purity of soul and body. It is not enough to keep the body chaste, if the soul is defiled by unchaste thoughts, since a thought against Chastity is as grievous as an act. Every imagination, every thought must be unsparingly crushed at its first beginning, it matters not how, provided it is done. Sometimes only the infliction of sharp physical pain can still the tempest, as was the case with St. Benedict, when he rolled his bare body in the thornbush, and never after was troubled by such temptations again.

Just as Chastity is the most precious virtue of the

Religious state, so is it also the most sensitive and the most easily sullied. There is no virtue the Religious must guard with such ever-watchful vigilance as this. Temptations will come again and again, but if the soul has her eyes fixed on her Lord, she will pass them by almost unheeding. The most sure and the most certain guard of Chastity is the gaze of the soul fixed upon the Giver of Chastity; then she cannot fail.

Lastly comes the Vow of Obedience, most difficult of all, because by it we give up ourselves; in giving up our own will, we give up our own selves in the most absolute way possible.

There are many who can keep the other two Vows with the utmost perfection, who yet find this beyond their strength. It does not come to us naturally but supernaturally; it is so contrary to that pride which is with so much difficulty cast out of the human heart. "We return to God," says St. Benedict in the opening of his Rule, "by way of obedience, who forsook Him by disobedience."[1] The foundation of the religious state is obedience; take that away and the state no longer exists.

So it is in the Army, take obedience away and you have only an armed mob, more dangerous to friend than foe. See what happened to the Russian armies once obedience ceased. The armies melted away and in a short while ceased to exist. The German military critics say that the success of the British Army was due to their strict discipline, and the failure of their own to its slackening. In the Army every officer down to a lance-corporal must be obeyed, and once a man gets his orders nothing will move him. "They are my orders, sir," and that is the final answer to any questioning. Men never hesitated nor faltered once the order was given. A raid was a very risky affair, but the men all went off quite cheerfully. There were the last words of farewell: "Well, good-bye, old fellow, and the best of luck," and next morning it was, "Poor so and so went West last night." I remember one gallant young officer who, because he was always courageous and ready, was called upon for all the difficult jobs. The orders would come through for a raid, and the

[1] *Regulae Prologus.*

Commanding Officer would say to the Adjutant: "Well, who do you think we had better send?" "Oh, send Smithers, he's always sure," and so Smithers would be rung up on the 'phone and in a few minutes enter the dug-out. "Look here, Smithers, we want you to take so many men and raid such a post to-night." "Yes, sir," says Smithers, bending down to look at the point indicated on the map. A few further words of instruction, and he is gone, without so much as a thought entering his head of suggesting sending someone else for a change.

Well, now, I have spoken a lot about the Army, because, after all, there is such a likeness between Army life and Religious life. But there is one big difference; provided you give external obedience, the Army will be satisfied, even though you may be exploding inside, but religion asks much more: the obedience it demands is the obedience of head and heart. The triumph of Religion is that we surrender our own ideas and wills to do the will of another, and that is magnificent. It is instant, unquestioning, generous and complete, carrying out the order in the way commanded, in the most complete and absolute manner possible. There is no arguing about an order; the only business of the religious is its execution. So complete was the obedience of St. Aloysius, that he dropped his pen, in the formation of a letter, when the first stroke of the bell went. That is what obedience means, the instant leaving of one work and changing over to another when the moment has arrived.

In religion someone is always in command, just as is the case in the Army, where, if only two men were left, one would take command and direct the other; the captain being killed, it is the lieutenant, and so on, down to the lance-corporal, and the senior private of the two. Now in religion it is the same, someone is always in command. If it is not the Prioress it is the sub-Prioress, right down to the senior of the last two Sisters in the Convent.

Obedience binds everywhere and always, there are no exceptions to the obligations of obedience. How good and sure and safe is the way of obedience, where there is no room for self-satisfaction and the swelling of pride, where we lay the axe to the root from which all other sins

take their rise. We receive an obedience as the Will of God speaking to us; the Superior is only God's instrument, the telephone He uses to convey His instructions to us.

This obedience is the obedience of love; there is a vast difference between the obedience exacted by fear and that inspired by love. The soul obeys with ardent, eager readiness, receives every command of the Superior as the command of her Lord and Lover, so there is a joy and even a holy liberty in this obedience which divides it *toto caelo* from the grudging obedience of the slave. It is this that supernaturalizes the exercise of the virtue, the soul obeys with joy, glad thus to manifest by the ever-ready promptitude of her obedience the sincerity and reality of her love. He is King, Master and Lord, having the right to the most loyal and most single-hearted obedience that the soul can render; but He is more than that, He is her Lover, and so her obedience is the fidelity and loyalty of the Lover as well as that of the soldier and servant.

CHAPTER XXI

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE AND DISCIPLINE

Now let us look at Observance and Discipline in Religion. You all know what "regular observance" means, and there is something wonderfully similar in the attention to all the small details which we find alike in the Army and in Religion.

When the young boys went off and "joined up" with eager enthusiasm for the battle line, they entered into a strange and surprising atmosphere. Everything was altogether different to what they had expected. The drills, forming fours, standing at attention, saluting, and all the complicated ceremonial by which a soldier is formed seemed to them so unnecessary, they wondered what it was all for, and yet it was all absolutely necessary in order to fit them for the work they had come to do. Those strange unintelligible sounds which proved to be words of command, the same evolutions repeated again and again with the caustic comments of the drill sergeant to help them the more speedily to perfection, all had their place in turning out the boys who won the war. It has been well said that you learn roughly, and in a short time, in the Army, what you learn gently and in a long time in Religion.

"I always feel sorry for the Postulants when they first come, they seem so like lost souls," said a little sister to me once, and of course it is quite true, they are feeling very lost indeed. All the careful observance of the little details of Religious life strikes them at first sight as so strange, so needless, and they are inclined to say: "I came here to love God, not for all this ceremonial."

The young soldier thinks there are a lot of things he would like to improve, but he is up against a wall. "This is *the way* we do it young man," and he soon realises there is nothing to do but fall in with it all, from polishing buttons to folding a blanket.

It is just the same in Religion, every little movement and detail has been long since thought out and settled, and each movement has its part to play in forming the perfect religious, just as it has in the Army in forming a good soldier.

The uniform with its many pockets seems rather strange at first, but before long the recruit finds that everything has its use. The Army attaches great importance to what seems the merest detail, how a man stands, holds his hands, head and so on; the uniform must be kept smart and clean, the buttons perfectly polished, the rifle bright, and all the equipment in order, the pockets fastened. "What a lot of attention to dress," thinks the young soldier, "can't we win the war without all this?"

The novice feels just as much surprise in Religion. There is a religious way of standing and sitting, holding the hands and arms, the religious dress must be kept perfectly clean, worn properly, not thrown on anyhow; there is a right way of adjusting its every detail as well as a wrong way, and the young novice is inclined to wonder what relation it all bears to the service of God.

There are pretty severe penances in the Army for faults of discipline, military police to see orders are obeyed, and the guard room for the defaulters. "The penalty for this is death," and "the penalty for that is death," and the young recruit begins to wonder, as he hears all this, whether he will get out alive. The Army has its "Orderly Room" where all the faults are dealt with, and Religion has its Chapter of faults, in which all the various breaches of regular observance are dealt with. You recognise a regiment at once by its discipline; if you see its members slouching along with hands in pockets, buttons unfastened, etc., well, you know there is no discipline worth speaking about there. Why shouldn't a soldier have his hands in his pockets? Well, it isn't soldierly, that's all; you feel it instinctively, although you can't say exactly why. So, when you see a Religious with arms swinging, you feel instinctively it is wrong, the hands should be hidden in the cowl sleeves or under the scapular, and the movements should not be too rapid. Why? Well, it's not religious, that's all.

Why bother about a uniform? Can't an Army fight without it? No, experience has shown that the uniform is a tremendous factor. Men will control themselves that they may not disgrace the uniform, and there have often been moments when men would have broken and run, but that the uniform helped to keep them firm. It is astonishing what a difference the uniform makes; a young soldier, directly he has assumed it, becomes a different being from what he was before; there it is, it is simply a fact, whatever the explanation.

What the uniform is to the Army, the habit is to the Religious. It does make a tremendous difference, it is only a little cloth, cut a particular way, but it marks off the wearer from the world; she is a religious and she must live up to the habit she wears. You can't measure what an influence the Religious habit has on the wearer; after the habit has been received, the young novice is a different person from what she was before.

Every movement in the choir, every inclination, every turning is important, it all goes to form character and shape the soul for perfection. See a regiment on parade, it is quite a religious ceremonial; or the mounting of the guard at night, carried out with zealous exactness to the smallest trifle. You can sum up a regiment at a glance by seeing them on parade, every movement absolutely perfect, every man moving at the same instant as the others, it is an impressive sight and a great lesson too.

You enter some fine church, say Quarr Abbey with its great choir of Benedictine monks, and watch the marvellous precision of every movement, it is wonderful and inspiring. There is nothing quite like it in the world.

The best disciplined regiment is also the best fighting regiment. All that drilling has been to some purpose, to bring a man to conform himself on the instant to the word of command, so that without reflection, once he hears the word, he performs the action it signifies. You see its value in action, when the men in extended order are moving forward against the enemy in perfect formation. It is a wonderful sight; there is the shriek of a shell and a man falls here and another there, but the line is going forward unheeding; it is all the result of discipline, if there were no

discipline all would be confusion. And the Army is great on tradition ; each regiment guards all that has come down to it from the past and watches against any innovation. So too, the uniforms are distinguished sometimes only by a badge, but it is all important. The Yellow Diamond means 17th London and nobody else, and the Yellow Heart the 15th and nobody else. These details, all carefully guarded keep up that *esprit de corps* that plays such a tremendous part in Army life.

Each religious Order or Congregation has its own distinctive dress by which it is marked off from the others, and there should be at least the same *esprit de corps* that is found in the Army. It is quite true that the habit is only a bit of cloth, but it is not the material of which it is composed, but what it stands for that matters. Just as the soldier's dress is the King's uniform, so is the Religious dress that of the King of kings, and the Religious loves her habit because it is the outward symbol of her union with her Lord. And she will love every little detail and every little observance and token of Religious life, both those in general and also all those that are special to her own order. So be strict and exact and very faithful in observing all these outward manifestations of your inward devotion to your King, they are the pledges and the witness that you belong wholly to Him.

The Religious habit declares that you have given yourself body and soul to the Lord your Lover, and that you are separated from the world unto Him "an elect vessel holy to the Lord."

What a wonderful spirit there was with the troops out in France, everyone sharing alike and wonderfully happy, in spite of the most difficult circumstances and most dangerous conditions, and what a bond of sympathy through it all, and how terribly the boys missed it when they came home and settled down to ordinary life again. The *esprit de corps* was wanting, and they felt the want of it. So did the girls. I remember meeting one very sad faced W.A.A.C. in the train, she had only been demobilized a few days, but oh ! it was all so different ; there everyone wanted to help everyone else, and here it was so different, there we were all so united.

That is the great joy of Community life, the wonderful helpfulness of it; the common life and the common end and the mutual sympathy and readiness to help which each sister bears to another, the wonderful supernatural charity that no one would believe possible unless they experienced it.

I say, if it existed in the Army, it is tenfold more true that it exists in Religion, and of course in a more supernatural way. Each one sees in the other a fellow worker in the same cause, one who, like herself, has been called and chosen by the King. So the days pass with wonderful sweetness and joy, which the austerity of the life only makes the more apparent, for nothing brings out the spirit of comradeship so much as hardship. There would not be half so much of that supernatural and affectionate *esprit de corps* if the life were easy and comfortable, and you always find this wonderful spirit flourishes in proportion to the severity and self sacrifice of the Order. Luxury simply kills that spirit, it requires the atmosphere of sacrifice in which to grow.

Saluting, again, is of great importance in the Army, and after all it is only ordinary courtesy, and that is why the Army pays so much attention to it. I remember the guard forgot to turn out one day when the General went by, and we did not hear the last of it for a week.

So it is in Religion. The inclination in passing is a salute, and it is never omitted without loss to the soul. You may say it is only the outside. So it is, but you cannot have an inside without it, and ofttimes the exterior is a very good index of the interior. A disordered exterior is generally the sign of a disordered interior.

It is wonderful how the discipline of a regiment can go down in the course of a few months, once relaxation sets in, and what a work it is to pull it up again, and it always begins with such small things.

The same thing is possible in religion. It begins with small things, omitting an inclination or the word "sister," when speaking to or of another, and in a short time a Community goes to pieces. If we always keep in mind for Whom we are doing it, we shall never suffer the smallest relaxation to creep in. After all, these little details are the courtesies of

Religious life and make a tremendous difference, and not a single one is omitted without some spiritual loss.

It is very important to be always "on time" for each duty. It was important in the Army, it was a great offence to be late. If you did not hear the bugle, you ought to, that's your business. So it is the business of the Religious to hear the bell. "Ignorance of orders is no excuse for not knowing them" in the Army. Why? Because it is again your business to know them. So in Religion, it is your business to know if there are any changes or new orders. It is what your eyes are given you for.

A true Religious is very careful to see what duties she is down for and to prepare for them, so that she may efficaciously fulfil them. If they are so careful in the Army for a merely temporal end, how much more must she be careful in Religion, for one that is Eternal?

CHAPTER XXII

HUMILITY

We all want to get into Heaven, but unless we have humility the low Gate of the Kingdom will bar our entrance.

Pugin was greatly impressed with the importance of humility, and so, when he built his Church at Ramsgate, he constructed a little wicket at the entrance, so that each person entering must bend low ; then there was a long corridor for reflection, and another wicket at the end to enforce the lesson. He desired that, by this inclination of the body, the lesson of humility might be impressed on the soul.

Now people have the most mistaken notions about humility and think it must be something extravagant and exaggerated, but that is the very contrary of what it really is ; humility is just the "exact truth," and the exact truth is often neither welcome nor pleasant. When people ask you to tell them the exact truth, you always wonder how much they really want. Humility, as it is the exact truth, is often extremely unpleasant, and a deal of courage is necessary to swallow it, as well as to tell it.

Let us keep this first fact about humility well before us. You hear people say they are not worthy to live they are such worthless sinners, and so on ; but just cross them on some pet fancy of theirs, and they will soon show you whether they really think they are not worthy to live. To pretend we are destitute of gifts we perfectly well know we possess is no humility at all, only affectation, the very contrary of humility. Every gift we have, natural or supernatural, comes from God, and so there is nothing to make us proud, even if we do possess gifts of either kind. "If thou hast received, why glory as if thou hast not received."

Now the first step in humility is not to desire human praise. It is extraordinary how some souls are always looking for a word of praise when they do anything, and they

must always be pushed on by a word of praise, or, like the mule, they come to a dead stop. Of all foolish things that poor fallen human nature goes after surely the most foolish of all is human praise. It does not matter a straw either way, whether it be praise or blame. How constantly we hear : "I wonder what they will think," but how rarely we hear : "I wonder what God will think." What does it matter, since in nine cases out of ten human judgment is all wrong, because "man looketh on the outward appearance but God upon the heart," and in consequence men are widely out in their conclusions, and nearly always very unfair ? How often we are praised by one person, and blamed by another for the very same thing. So the soul that has God before her eyes will not be moved by the praise or dispraise of men. The only thing that matters is how God regards it. Little Sister Teresa found out how utterly unimportant human opinions are, and how foolish it is to pay the slightest attention to them, for, after she had been in Carmel some time, a Sister met her one day and said : "Oh, my dear Sister, how dreadfully ill you look, I knew our life would kill you." A little later the same day another Sister met her and said : "Oh, my dear Sister, how wonderfully well you look, I never could have believed our life would suit you so well" : so, as she said, after that she was quite determined to give no heed to human judgment whatever it might be.

The soul that is set on God is not troubled by praise or blame, she knows the thing to be exactly what it is in God's eyes, neither more nor less ; besides, as the thing is already done, praise cannot make it any better nor blame any worse.

A good priest, very devoted to Rubrics, made the sad mistake of kneeling at *Regina Coeli* on a certain Easter Day, and it quite spoilt his Easter for him, he could not get over it. Yet probably nobody noticed it, or if they did, were none the worse for it. So we are not to seek praise, because it is not worth getting, and we shall generally get praised for quite the wrong thing. You know, after a word of praise from one, you will probably get a cold douche from another, so altogether things will be fairly equalized.

As the soul advances in interior ways, God's light, shining within, will make manifest her defects in such fearfully clear light, that she will realise very vividly indeed that she

is utterly undeserving of praise for anything she does, and the more she sees herself and her motives, the more she will despise herself, and esteem herself as the very least and most worthless of all. A young lady went once to the Curé d'Ars to consult him about her vocation. Said she: "I don't quite see whether I ought to go to the Presentation or the Visitation. I am rather inclined to the Visitation, because they *know* me." "Alas!" said the Curé, "they know no great thing then." Those few words let in the light of humility, and she saw she must seek God alone in her vocation.

Humility makes us like to God, just as pride makes us like to the Devil. How often our Lord impresses on us the supreme importance of humility, and on that one occasion on which He spoke of His Sacred Heart, what was it He said? "Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart."

A humble soul will always be gentle, pitiful and forgiving, whereas a proud one will always be hard, harsh, and revengeful. The saints were hard as steel to themselves, but overflowing with pity and compassion to others. The closer united the soul becomes to God, the more she reflects the pity and humility of His Divine Heart.

Now the second stage in humility is willingly to suffer humiliations when they come. They will come, sure enough, have no fear about that. There are plenty of good people in the world who will see you do not go short of them. Harsh and unjust condemnation, biting and bitter criticisms, everything you may try to do twisted into something else; all these we must suffer some time or another in our life, whether we will it or not, and they can either lift us up almost to heaven, or almost cast us down to hell. If we bear them with patience, they will draw us closer to His Heart, make us more gentle and lovable, more considerate and thoughtful, since, having experienced humiliations ourselves, we shall be very loth to inflict them on others. And perhaps, after all, our greatest humiliations arise from our own failings, mistakes and imperfections. Of course I know there are some souls who think everything they do and say must be perfect. Alas, we can only pity them and pray that some day their eyes may be opened,

but I do not speak to such, but to those who have at least begun to have some self-knowledge. And surely to such it is their own failings and faults that bring the most grievous humiliations of all, compared with which those that creatures inflict are comparatively light.

A stage further in humility and the soul rejoices in humiliations. That certainly is by no means easy, but the soul that has begun her life of union with her Lord cannot only suffer but rejoices with the Apostles, who, after they had been beaten, departed from the Council: "Rejoicing that they had been counted worthy to suffer shame for His sake."

Merely to put up with an injustice or harsh criticism is much, to rejoice at it is more. So we must rejoice, for we shall have many occasions in which to suffer. Remember the beatitude of Our Lord: "Blessed are ye when men shall say all manner of evil against you, falsely, for My Name's sake, rejoice and leap for joy." The praise of the world would indeed be our condemnation, since friendship with the world is enmity against God.

When placed in positions of responsibility, and having work to carry out for God that perchance brings praise, we must never pay even passing heed to it, but hold ourselves totally indifferent to it, no matter from whom or where it comes. How often praise has wrecked the soul that has lived securely under blame and humiliation! God's praise is all we have to seek; if He is pleased, everything is all right, no matter what man may say. How utterly absurd it is to be pleased with the praise, or offended with the dispraise of a fellow creature, fallibly weak and exactly like ourselves.

The soul, living her life in God, will be so entirely absorbed in Him, that whatever praise may fall upon her she will scarce be conscious of it. Having Him, she has already all she desires, and in His praise, all she seeks. Nothing repels us so much as the showing of pride; it is so utterly foolish and so contemptible, that even the most materially-minded can only be amused at it. Pride peoples hell with damned souls, just as humility peoples Heaven with saints. We have not only to rejoice at humiliations when they come, but to desire their coming. The standard that Our Lord

has established is so contrary to that of the world, that there can only be war between them ; humility is the virtue that goes the most against the world-spirit. He has given the example, for : " He humbled Himself and took upon Himself the form of a slave," to cure our pride.

We have nothing whereof to boast, save our sins, and so there is no ground for pride and much for humility when we realize that truth.

Sanctity and humility go together. One cannot conceive of a proud saint—the thing is unthinkable. Why? Because the saint knows himself, knows that every good act, every good thought, every good work is God's working in him, that of himself he is nothing and can do nothing, and yet that through Christ he " can do all things."

Humility never presses its own opinion unseasonably. Some people seem to think they are the only ones gifted with understanding, and strive to bear everyone down by the force of their arguments or the loudness of their voice. But humility is ever ready to let others have their opinion, and is never tenacious of its own.

There are abundant opportunities of practising humility at recreation. Someone says such and such a thing and we are inclined to say : " Oh, no, it was quite different, you are entirely mistaken." Now humility will keep silent, it does not matter in the least either way, and consequently there is no reason to intervene.

CHAPTER XXIII

SILENCE—SPEECH—CHEERFULNESS—PEACE

Silence is a very difficult virtue for some people ; they talk to such an amazing extent that one wonders they ever stop ; they seem to be silent only in their sleep and not always then. Considering that for every idle word we must surely give account, we need to be very careful. Silence is golden and speech is only silvern at the best, and at the worst—well, we had better not follow it.

Of all the ways in which we may most easily offend God, certainly speech is the readiest.

The two chief topics of conversation in this country seem to be the weather and our neighbour. The weather is soon disposed of, and there is little left of the neighbour by the time the conversation is finished. "Oh, I like her very much, but. . . ." That "but" disposes of her. If we cannot say anything good of a person, let us be silent, and in truth it will be very hard to find anyone of whom we can say no good at all. Even the worst person out has some good, hidden it may be, but there, if only we would look for it. How amazingly the good in men came to the top when out in the trenches ; it had been there all the while, hidden like a spark in the ashes. It only needed the occasion to bring it out. How often, as a party of men is going along, one is stricken down by a shell, the others stop, bind him up, and gently carry him away. It never enters their heads to leave him, although the next shell might put them in worse case than he ; and that happened not once but thousands of times.

So let us look for the good in everyone, and we shall find a considerable amount of it in most.

In Religious life we have to bear with each others' defects ; there must be mutual forbearance and love. Let us see our speech is always kind and never seasoned with

vinegar. If we had no defects at all we should be in Heaven and not here, since Heaven is the home of the perfect. Let our speech be always kindly and let us strive always to cheer up the one who is down.

If a speech does not please, do not let us respond in a like strain, but rather turn aside the awkward utterance and cover it by a kind one.

There is immense importance in saying the right thing at the right time. Some people are so inconsiderate, they blurt out whatever comes to their mind without an instant's reflection, while others, naturally thoughtful and sympathetic, always find the right words at the right moment. So many of the things that wound are simply utterances without thought.

Our speech must always be governed by a wise discretion. St. Benedict says of the Porter that he must be one who knows how to give and also receive an answer, and it does need very often a great deal of discretion to know how to answer some people.[1]

The soul who is advancing in God's service is slow to speak, because she knows how easily all that has been gained by silence may be lost by speech.

The occasions in the Religious life for speaking are necessity, love, and spiritual good of another, and besides these three there are no others.

Necessity means, when we have to give or receive orders, and give or receive explanations of the work that has to be done. Love, when a few words may be helpful and the spirit bids us speak. And lastly, when some soul is in need of a little spiritual help and consolation. If speech is kept within these limits, the Spirit will help and guide our words and we shall avoid a thousand evils.

Silence is very precious, because it is then God visits us and the soul advances most rapidly in the way of interior union; speech is always a great hindrance to the Divine operations.

Let us love solitude and silence. We cannot expect the Divine visitation if we are for ever speaking and seizing every possible opportunity to have speech of someone or other, like those voluble talkers whose words rush on like a torrent and the listeners can only get in a word now and

[1] *Regula*, cap. lxvi.

again. "Oh, yes, indeed." "Was that so?" "Exactly." Nothing more is expected, and when we finally get free of them, we only carry away with us a bad headache as a memorial of their visit.

How sweetly restful to the soul is the stillness of a Religious House; its very silence speaks of God and the soul is able to expand and reach forth to Him in a way that is impossible amid the distraction of speech.

Then again in Religion we must always cultivate this spirit of cheerfulness, that "rejoicing always in the Lord" which the Apostle loved so much.

Cheerfulness indeed is a vital element in Religion. One can always tell if a soul is going to succeed by that one sign alone. God does not want us to "go mourning all the day long." The Religious life has many difficulties, but a joyous spirit rides triumphantly over them all. A cheerful heart is God's best gift and Our Lord wants us to rejoice and be glad. The soul that cannot laugh is in a very sad way. In the line, over in France, how astonishingly cheerful the men were, ever ready with a joke, no matter what happened. Even the next section of trench being shelled amused them. Going back to Ypres a young officer said to me: "It feels quite homelike to hear the roll of the guns again."

Let us serve the Lord with gladness. We have every reason to rejoice, and we can be glad even in the midst of suffering, rejoicing that we can bear something for the Lord. He has chosen us, set us in the cloister of His Love, filled our heart with His graces, given us Himself, chosen us to be co-workers with Him in the saving of souls and the extension of His Kingdom. More, He has given us of His Spirit, and the blessed promise that we shall bring forth fruit unto Life Everlasting. And lastly He has written our names in His Book of Life. Surely, when we reflect on all this, we must rejoice and be glad. And we possess the blessed peace that passes all understanding, that peace of which Our Lord said: "Not as the world giveth do I give unto you." How wonderful is the peace which that soul enjoys who has made the total abandonment of all to Him. She has no desires, no wishes, no aspirations apart from Him. Her peace can be troubled by nothing that can

possibly befall in this world, for just as her peace is independent of everything in it, so it cannot be disturbed by anything in it. If sickness comes, if loss of worldly goods comes, if death comes, well, it is His Will. He knows it all, and the soul welcomes it all because it is His Will. In the eyes of the world God is often cruel. A poor distracted father met me once in a fury of rage against God. "God is a robber, He has stolen my child, He has no right to take him." That shows how quickly the peace of the world goes. But a mother, whose four boys were slain, one by one, in the war, only said:—"It is His Holy Will. He has taken them in their innocence that sin might not touch them." She possessed not the false peace of earth, but the true peace of Heaven.

The soul, freed from everything and clinging only to her Lord, does not reason as to why He sends this or that tribulation or suffering, she just takes it with joy from her Lover as a love-gift from Him. Of course this does not mean she is like a marble statue, devoid of sense and feeling. No, she has a heart that can suffer, and the closer she has drawn to her Lord, the more capable of suffering her heart becomes, but through it all she knows that "everything is all right," for life and death and all the happenings of time are in His Hands. He is controlling the events of every moment and never takes His Hands off the control. He is behind all the tangled mass of the world's troubled life, small and trifling as it is compared with eternity. And the soul rejoices and is glad that all things are thus in His control and would not have one of them other than it is. He is her peace. "In the world you shall have tribulation, but in Me peace." Our peace is in Him and all the ever-changing circumstances without can never touch it. The soul says to Him:—"Lord, take me, use me, throw me on one side just as Thou pleasest, for Thy pleasure is my life and my peace." There are times when He seems to be asleep, as when the Apostles were in the boat and overtaken by the tempest, and, although the soul does not mind if He sleeps in fair weather, she finds it a little disquieting when the storm rages fiercely around her. Still even then she is in peace, for she knows He whom wind and seas obey is within her and needs but to speak the word to still the

tempest and calm the waves. What a wonderful trust Job had, without the light and the grace of the Sacraments and the revelation of our King to help him, yet when all his goods are lost, and the breathless messengers of first disasters have scarce concluded their tale ere others arrive with the worse tidings of the death of all his children, he only says: "It is the Lord, let Him do what pleaseth Him." Then, stricken in his own body with a most frightful disease, he still keeps his peace. "Though he slay me yet will I trust in Him." What big demands the Lord does make on His children and how well He tests the peace He has given them.

There is only one thing that can disturb the peace of the soul, that is when her glance is turned in ever so small a degree to the creature, then comes disturbance; it may be only a glance but it is enough. She must have eyes only for Him and then His blessed peace will reign in her heart, even though she be haled to martyrdom. Her body may be burned, her eyes torn out, but her will cannot be touched, nor the strong tranquil peace within. The world cannot snatch away her peace or destroy it. All her projects may fail, all her labours end in the most utter disaster, she may seem to be abandoned and forsaken by all, but yet, having not even the least desire apart from Him, she will abide in perfect peace. She has immolated herself to Him, made the great abandonment, He is hers and she is His, and nothing can tear her from His embrace. The Devil cannot trouble her about the future, because it will be what her Lord wants; she looks to the past and reads the story of His Love, and she sees that every circumstance, even those that looked most hopeless at the time, were all directed by His all-merciful love. She is without anxiety, she does not permit it to creep in, for the things that are dreaded most rarely come to pass, although something else, utterly unforeseen, does. She takes "no thought for the morrow" for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. She is mindful of the words of Her Love to her: "Consider the lilies of the field," and she knows that anxiety for the future can only paralyse her in the present.

"Casting all your care upon Him for He careth for you," so the great Apostle exhorted those who were living in the

midst of persecution, not knowing which day might see their swift passage to eternity. It is this blessed certitude of the Divine Lover's care for her that keeps the soul in perfect peace. She knows that to-day's needs will have to-day's grace, and to-morrow's need will have to-morrow's grace, so she does not want grace a day in advance as some do, because she knows that He knows all that is coming. She is assured of His love and so, totally and utterly abandoned with the sweet confidence of a child in the arms of his mother, she commits herself to His care.

CHAPTER XXIV

JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT AND HIS ADORERS

There are mysteries of our Faith which, even after they have been revealed, lose nothing of their mysteriousness. The Blessed Trinity, the existing of Three separate Persons in one self-same nature, remains as much a mystery after its revelation as before. And so, too, the Blessed Sacrament remains still a mystery even after its revealing. How a little wine and a little bread can become the God-Man Sacrificed on Calvary is a mystery which has staggered the human intellect since its first shewing. How the substance of the bread and wine vanish, and the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ take its place—the outward appearance yet remaining—will be a mystery till the end of time. We know the fact, but the "how" of it is beyond human comprehension.

The answer to those who hesitate to believe because it is such a mystery is this: the True Religion touches the Infinite, and that being the case, there must be mystery, for the finite cannot compass the Infinite; so they who seek for a religion they can fully understand, search for one that must be false. We know the fact, and we know that He Who cannot lie revealed it, that His Church that cannot fail has declared it, and that is all we want.

Let us go back to that first wonderful moment, when the mystery passing wonder was first revealed by the Lord, and take our stand with the onlookers and listen to its telling at Capernaum.

A little before Jesus had worked that most astonishing miracle which shadowed forth in marvellous wise the great miracle of the Blessed Sacrament. He had fed the five thousand with the five barley loaves and two fishes, and from that wonderful feast His Apostles had gathered up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained over

and above to them that had eaten. Then He had passed over the lake in the night, walking upon its waters, and in the morning entered into Capernaum. And those who had been thus miraculously fed, taking ship, crossed the lake in search of the Lord. And when they find Him they say to Him: "Rabbi, when camest Thou hither?" and He answers them, "Amen, I say to you, you seek Me not because you saw the miracle, but because you did eat of the loaves and were filled." And then He gives them this most solemn warning: "Labour not for the meat that perisheth but for that which endureth to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you." They immediately say to Him, "What shall we do that we may work the works of God," and He answers them: "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him Whom He hath sent." Straightway, with extraordinary forgetfulness of the miracle that had brought them after Him, they say: "What sign dost Thou shew that we may know and believe Thee? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert as it is written, He gave them bread from Heaven to eat." They do not perceive the arresting likeness between the bread that had nourished their fathers in the desert and the miracle of the day before. He corrects them and tells them that the bread they speak of was only a shadow of the true. He says: "Moses gave you not bread from Heaven, but My Father giveth the true bread from Heaven. For the bread of God is that which cometh down from Heaven and giveth life to the world." At once they make answer: "Lord, give us always this bread." Then He gives them the amazingly wonderful answer: "I am the Bread of Life. He that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst." At once there is movement and strife in that eager throng; they are staggered at His incomprehensible words. He has declared that He is Himself the living bread from Heaven, and they say: "How can it be? Is not this Jesus, the Son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how can He say, 'I came down from Heaven'?" But He answers them and presses the fact of His Divine origin with resistless force, and opens the mystery of the Blessed Sacrament. "I am the Bread of Life. Your fathers did eat

manna in the desert and are dead. This is that bread which cometh down from Heaven, that if a man eat of it he may not die. I am the Living Bread which came down from Heaven. The bread that I shall give is My flesh for the life of the world." The bewilderment grows, and there is the buzz of excited comment as the astounding statements fall on their astonished ears. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they exclaim. What an utterly preposterous and impossible claim! But the Lord answers with uncompromising insistence: "Amen, I say to you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood you shall not have life in you. . . He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me and I in Him." Even the faith of His disciples is staggered now. They have followed Him, left house and friends and suffered much, only to be brought up against this claim that is so utterly beyond them. They exclaim: "This is a hard saying and who can bear it?" And in truth it is a hard saying, and it has been a hard saying from the first day it was uttered unto this. But there is no compromise. He puts the question: "Does this scandalize you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?" And so they turn away. He has no explanation to offer to ease their difficulties, for there is none to give, no softening of His declaration, for no softening is possible. They walk no more with Him. They turn away from the Lord of Life because they cannot make the intellectual surrender that He demands. And as they are departing he turns to the twelve. Has He a word for them that shall make it easier, less difficult of apprehension? No, never a word, only: "Will you also go away?" It is the great alternative, the utter blind acceptance of absolute faith or the turning away from Him for ever. St. Peter answers: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we have believed and have known that Thou art Christ the Son of God." The wonder is no clearer to him than to those who have turned away, but he trusts where he cannot trace and fixes all his faith on this, that Jesus is God and that God's words cannot fail. It must be true because He has said it. With strong unfaltering faith he clings to the

Godhead and the one sure ground of his confidence. He puts no trust in his understanding of the mystery, all his trust is in the infallible character of the Speaker. God has spoken : it is enough.

All those who have taken their stand with Peter, from that day to this, have kept the Faith of Peter. The mystery is as great for them as for him, they believe on the same ground as he. They answer with St. Thomas Aquinas, *Credo quidquid dixit Dei Filius, nil hoc verbo veritatis verius.*

Mark, too, how this first revelation was given when the Paschal Feast was nigh at hand. Then there comes another Paschal Feast when His words shall be verified. The last evening of His earthly course arrives, that evening in which the old rite shall be celebrated for the last time. When it is finished He takes the white unleavened bread into His Hands, and breaks it, saying : "This is My Body," and then the chalice : "This is My Blood." The amazed eyes of the Apostles see the mystery completed in their very sight, the incomprehensible words of that other Paschal time fulfilled, as with His own Hands He gives Himself and they are fed with the Body and the Blood of their Lord. How it is done they know not, but the fact that it is done they know. In all the many astounding marks of God's dealing with His children, nothing is more surpassingly wonderful than this tremendous mystery of the Blessed Sacrament. It was a great mystery at the first, and with the passing of the years it grows not less. Look at that circle gathered round the table of the Lord, the first adorers, types of all those who have gathered round His table through all the days of time.

First there is Peter, impetuous, eager, full of faith, and in his ardent way loving his Lord very sincerely, yet very weak and irresolute when he ought to be strong. He certainly received his Lord with most heartfelt faith. Our Lord puts something before him as unwelcome as the first telling of His Passion. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." But St. Peter answers with impetuous haste : "Though all men shall forsake thee yet not I. I will go to prison and to death for Thee." But His Lord knows him better than he knows himself and says : "The cock

shall not crow before thou hast denied me." Poor Peter! he was very sincere, he meant all he said, and yet so short a while later what a sorry figure he is! He is a type of those who ever since with earnest ardour and love have gathered round the Altar, and yet in critical moments have failed through over-confidence in themselves, and through their failure have learned to trust not in themselves but in Him.

Then there is St. John, a wonderfully different type, an interior soul who shared the secrets of the Divine Heart and loved with a strong unwavering constancy. He is a type of those interior lovers of the Lord who, when they have once found Him, cling fast to Him through all. He was the disciple "whom Jesus loved" in quite a special way. He is next to Him at that wonderful first Eucharist and his head rests on his Lord's Heart. He is standing with His Mother and the faithful women on Calvary, the only man to stand beneath the shadow of the Cross. And yet Our Lord does not choose him for the headship of His Church.

And St. Thomas is there, a strong soul and loyal, of few words, and finding faith very hard. Belief does not come easily to him. He wants to touch and see. When he hears that the Lord is risen he says: "Unless I shall put my finger into the print of the nails and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." Yet when the Lord comes his confession is very complete: "My Lord and my God!" When he does believe it is with a whole-hearted belief and there are no reservations. When the Lord was going into danger, he is not very demonstrative, yet he says to the others: "Let us go with Him that we may also die with Him." He is loyal and the type of all those souls ever since, who have never found faith easy, but once they have found it are very steadfast, very loyal, and very thorough in the allegiance they give.

There is one dark sinister figure, Judas, so wholly out of touch with all that is passing. Strange, Our Lord knew all about him, knew exactly what he would do, knew his one weakness—love of money—and, knowing it, made him treasurer. It seems so extraordinary that instead of keeping the temptation from him he put it right in his way. How devout hearts have shrunk back from the thought that

Judas received his Lord, but yet it is true. He, too, receives his Lord. What a contrast in that first reception! Eleven to life and one to death. He is the type of all the betrayers of the Lord, from that day to this. How amazing it is, that the betrayers of the Lord have always been those who have been brought into the closest relation with Himself. Trace the history of all the heresies and apostacies of the past. I think only one heresy originated with a layman. All the rest were originated by Bishops and Priests, mostly Bishops. They whose hands had been anointed and consecrated, who had handled the Word of life, these have been His cruellest betrayers, these are they who have sold Him into the hands of His enemies. As we look at the life of Our Lord, as He has lived it through the ages in this most wonderful Sacrament, how we stand amazed that, foreseeing all the betrayals, all the ingratitude, all the outrages, all the sacrileges, all the cold indifference of His own, He yet went forward and instituted this miracle of His Love. "He came to His own and His own received Him not." How true it is to-day that His own receive Him not. How many Catholics pass the Church in which He dwells, with never a thought of entering in to say even "Good day" to their Lord. They have time for all but Him. What a wonder, what an amazing manifestation of the love of His Heart, is this perpetual dwelling in the midst of His own. He who holds the heavens outspread and the whole Universe in the hollow of His Hand, who giveth life to all flesh, is yet contained in the little white host and makes His dwelling place in the hearts of His creatures. It is a mystery so tremendous that it is not surprising that the first hearers were overwhelmed at its telling, or that men in every age have found it a hard saying. They found it a hard saying at the Reformation. How is it possible, they exclaimed, that the great God of all can be contained beneath an outward showing so feeble, so weak and so helpless? It was the marvel of Bethlehem intensified a thousandfold. At Bethlehem the might of the Godhead was shrouded beneath the weakness of the helpless babe; in the Blessed Sacrament the might of the Godhead and the weakness of the Humanity are hidden beneath the little white host. But His Bride did not falter in her trust, she met the challenge and gave her

answer: "Jesus Christ, True God and True Man, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity, truly and substantially present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar." She compromised as little as her Lord. The truth becomes but the more definite the longer we look at it. No doubt if the Bride would soften down the truth she might win many adherents, for the complaint is ever the same, she is "too exact and too precise." But not to gain all the world would she be guilty of the smallest infidelity to Him to Whom alone she belongs.

The way is narrow, the gate is straight, and men would broaden the one and widen the other; but not so the Bride, she will not swerve one hair's breadth from the Faith her Lord has committed to her.

Who comes, to whom, and why?

Who comes? The great God who made all things, the same Jesus uplifted in torments on the Cross, the same Jesus Who rose victorious on the first Easter morning, the same Jesus Who sped triumphant to Heaven, the same Jesus Who will come at the last to judge and doom the living and the dead. Yes, this same Jesus, whose torn and bleeding Body balanced the price of my sin against the matchlessness of His Love, Whose Soul was severed from His Body in darkness indescribable and in torment unutterable and in desolation inexpressible, this Jesus, Whose love exceeds all conceiving and Whose compassion passes all telling, He it is Who comes to me. Yes it is "My Lord and my God" Who comes.

And to whom does He come? To a creature, the work of His Hands, who, in the light of His greatness, is less than nothing, to a creature who has valued His love so lightly, received Him often so coldly, so many times squandered His graces, so often forgotten Him, so often turned away her eyes from the great beholding to try and satisfy them with perishing things, to one utterly undeserving of the least of His mercies and inconceivably unworthy that He should enter in. And yet He comes; *Domine, non sum dignus!* And I shall never be worthy, though it were possible to spend a thousand years in preparing, that, even once, He should enter this poor heart of mine. No, it is not that I am worthy or ever can become such,

but rather my utter poverty and my supreme need draws Him to me. Come then and make a Bethlehem for Thyself in the poor stable of my heart!

And why does He come? He comes that we "may have life and may have it more abundantly." Life eternal, that is the gift He comes to give. "As the living Father hath sent Me and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me shall live by me." He knows the depths of our misery, our wretched weakness, our contemptible meanness, our manifold failures, our own unutterable nothingness. Yet He comes like a King to a beggar, not only to upraise us, but to transform us into Himself, that His own Divine Life may be our life, that we may abide in Him and He in us. Without Him we cannot live and without Him we dare not die. If we are to live the supernatural life, it can only be by partaking of that life, and He comes to be our life. He incorporates us into His very Self, so that we may become bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh, one spirit with Him. By this most blessed and marvellous indwelling He transforms us—more, conforms us to His own image and likeness—so that in very truth we become partakers of His Divinity, as truly as He became Partaker of our humanity.

Then He is Sacrifice as well as Sacrament. When we assist at the pleading of the great Sacrifice of the Mass, it is the self-same Sacrifice of Calvary and not another, not a repetition of that Sacrifice but the very same, just as the sun which arises each morning is the same sun which shone the day before, so is this the same Sacrifice, eternally one and indivisible. In time, all things that are future are ever becoming present and from the present ever becoming past, but when we step off from time into eternity, we shall leave behind that which passes and come to that which *is*, for all things *are* in Him. Because God *is*, the Sacrifice of Calvary *is*. Near and far and past and present forsake their meaning when we come to Him. He is "The Lamb slain before the foundation of the world." The Sacrifice of the Mass is the Sacrifice of Calvary; the same Lamb slain, the same Jesus uplifted. Look at the sun. Each day he appears to rise, travel across the sky and set, but yet it is not so, only in appearing. And so, too, he appears new every morning, yet he is ever the same. Go to Rome, Moscow, Calcutta,

New York, and it is the same sun which is shining on all. Not a reproduction, but the same, not new each day, but always and ever the same. Could we but step off this world, as it spins through space, and stand away from it, we should see the one sun without variation of night and day. And the light of the sun is not diminished because of the millions who rejoice in his shining. What he bestows on one he bestows on all; what he gives to-day he has given in all past days and will give all days to come. That is a comparison very feeble and imperfect, but yet it may help us a little to realise the great fact of the Eternal One-ness of the Sacrifice of Calvary and the Mass. Morning by morning this Sacrifice is offered in every land, countless millions rejoice in the light of its pleading, countless millions have rejoiced in the past, countless millions will rejoice in days to come, yet It is ever one and the same, and like the sun, is not lessened by the millions who rejoice in Its supernatural light.

This great Sacrifice is life-giving, for as the serpent was lifted up in the desert that all beholding might live, so also must the Son of Man be lifted up, that all who look may live. He is giving life to all flesh, He has been giving, He will go on giving until the day of doom.

The Priest utters words not his own but the Lord's, for the Lord speaks through him, so he says, not: "This is the Body of Christ," but: "This is My Body," not: "This is the Blood of Christ," but: "This is My Blood." How wonderful it is! The same Sacrifice, the same Body, the same Blood, the same Lord, the same Lover. How shall we ever enter into this most tremendous mystery as we ought? For the brief moment when the great Sacrifice is uplifted we touch reality, this shadowland of time falls away, past, present, future, far, near, all vanish in the wonder of this transcendent Mystery. He is heard because of His strong crying, it is the strong crying, the eternal crying of the Everlasting Son. We stand upon Calvary, for the Mass is Calvary and Calvary is the Mass. It is the Sacrifice of Unity and St. Paul loves to dwell on it as such. "We being *many* are made *one*" by it because we partake of the one head, and partaking of the one Head partake of the One Sacrifice. In that wonderful moment

all that live and love in Him are united in a way that escapes every mode of expression, for the far off are nigh and earth and heaven are oned in an amazing union in that pleading of the all-sufficient Sacrifice. It is the Sacrifice of the At-one-ment since it makes all one with Him and in Him, and in Him one with each other. That is why the Sacrifice is such an altogether consoling act; as we kneel there at His Feet, we reach through space, we are in touch in a mystical way with the dear ones at the very ends of the earth, nay more, with the citizens of heaven itself. All barriers are broken and swept away in its mighty unity. How strangely blind are they who would divide the Sacrifice of Calvary and the Sacrifice of the Mass, and see two where there is only one. It is as impossible to divide the Sacrifice as it is to divide the sun, nay more impossible. It would be very foolish to suppose that the shining of the sun to-day takes away from the shining of yesterday, but how much more foolish to think that our beholding of the great Sacrifice to-day takes away from that of yesterday. There is no yesterday in Him, for He is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. We behold the Sacrifice to-day and it is the same blessed, glorious, all-saving Sacrifice that it was yesterday and all days before, and shall be all days yet to be.

Only in a glass, darkly, do we behold the mighty Mystery here below, but the day will come when we shall behold It in the great showing of eternity. Then we shall see the great everlasting NOW of it in all its unveiled splendour and magnificent majesty, since there that great Sacrifice is the very light of the City of God, for that City hath no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the Glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And how glorious and splendid, dear sisters, is your work here at Tyburn, where day and night you offer the adoration of your love at His Feet, for He in His wonderful Sacramental Life is ever on His Throne to receive the love of your heart. In the silence of this Chapel in which the rush of the great world outside seems strangely hushed and very far off, Our King has ever before Him His Adorers; in unending succession you come and go, through the long hours of the day and the silent watches of the night, for while the great City sleeps you still keep vigil, pleading, praying, interced-

ing with your King and Lover, and obtaining from His Heart graces that cannot be counted.

The Contemplative Life of Adoration of Our Jesus in the Sacrament of His Love is your magnificent vocation, and it is so magnificent because so triumphantly and utterly supernatural, so totally at variance with all earthly conceptions, so splendidly and defiantly other-worldly.

And He has chosen Tyburn to set His Name there, and Tyburn is a wonderful place, because of all the wonderful works that He has wrought there, and these are only the promise of a more glorious and magnificent and splendid future. "The latter house shall be more glorious than the first.". . . "It is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes." Tyburn is the sign of the supernatural, the standard set up by the Lord in the heart of this great City, for a testimony unto them. Yours is a great and glorious Apostolate, for the Apostolate of the Cloister is the vastest and widest-reaching that may be, transcending all the narrow limits in which human activity is restrained, reaching out over all this great City and beyond, over this dear land of ours and yet beyond, over France, over Europe, and yet beyond, over Asia, and the Apostolic heart is not yet satisfied, over Africa, over America, over all the earth, for your Apostolate is only measured, only limited by the extent of it. Yours is the Apostolate of prayer and that has no bounds, because He has set it none. He expects this of you, it is what He has brought you here for, to labour for Him, to be co-partners and co-workers with Him in the most magnificent of all works, the salvation of souls.

Of course, there comes first the sanctification and purification of your own souls, for He must fashion His instruments for their work. Very often this is very painful to the instrument, but be sure that the more you approach Him, the more you are being fitted to be a vessel apt for His use. The rough edges have to be taken off, the great work of purification done, you have to become all that He desires, that you may become fit instruments for Him. The soul has to be emptied of all the things of earth that He himself may fill her. And then, when He has fitted you for the work, there is no limit to what you can do for souls, for it is no longer you that work, but your Lord and Lover Who works in you.

And it is no wonder He has established in so marvellous a way this Apostolate of His most loving Heart, here at Tyburn, for it is a place that has been watered with the Blood of the Martyrs. How glorious a throng of the Lord's lovers have passed Tyburn way, through savage torture and cruel pain to the glory of God's elect. They loved with a love strong as death, they came here rejoicing they were counted worthy to suffer for His Name, they reddened the earth with their blood. So Tyburn is the fruit that has been brought forth as the fruit of their blood, for the Lord promised one of His victims that the day should surely come which we behold. He showed His servant the future glory that was to be established upon this spot, which He has made glorious by the death of His servants, and He has made it glorious again for here the Lord is dwelling, day and night adored in that very Sacrament for Which they laid down their lives. Your heritage is magnificent. What is Tyburn but Calvary, what that Tyburn tree but the gibbet of the Cross for His faithful lovers? As He was lifted up on Calvary, so His servants were lifted up here, or rather He was lifted up in them. And now He Himself is lifted up in the Sacrament of His Love, and is drawing all to Himself. How amazingly and wonderfully true has the Lord's prophecy of Himself been accomplished. For men are drawn to Him, wherever this mighty Sacrifice is uplifted, whether in the majesty of some superb Cathedral or the poverty of a stable, whether in the one or the other, wherever He is lifted up, souls are drawn to Him, and turning their eyes to Him find life in that sight; there is life, everlasting life in a look at the Crucified One.

As Tyburn was the glorious Calvary of His lovers, no wonder the Lord has chosen it for His dwelling-place, no wonder He has glorified it already, and is glorifying it more and more every day.

So, dear sisters, you are here, first as intercessors. You kneel at His Feet to obtain the conversion of sinners, to draw souls to His Feet. You are here to pour out your adoring love, to supply the place of hearts that are cold. See that yours are hot. You are here to console His Heart by the fire of love you bear Him, and make up, as far as you may, for the indifference of others. Here is your work,

adoration, intercession—yes—and expiation. You are here to plead for sinners, and if He will not give because you are His servants, He *must* give because you are His lovers, for love can never be denied. Names stream in, people turn to Tyburn with extraordinary confidence for the most seemingly impossible things and they say : "Tyburn will do it," and indeed they are not disappointed. God has wrought many wonderful works in this place, and a day will come when all that Tyburn has done will be revealed, and then we shall see that what we have known is only a trifle to that which has been hidden. The sound of Tyburn has gone forth unto all the earth.

And so you are set here in Tyburn to labour in this most glorious Apostolate, and the Lord is saying to you as He said to Sister Teresa : "Look and behold the fields white unto the harvest," and He wants you to labour in those fields by the way of intercessory prayer. God could do without any instruments, He could do His work directly, He could as easily enlighten every soul without any medium as with one, but such is not His way. He has called us to be His instruments through whom He wills His work to be done. He has called us out of the world, brought us into the cloister of His love for nothing else than this. You know, you meet souls out in the world who, you think, should surely be in the cloister, and the Lord's choice has not fallen on them. Then you come upon some wild young child, up to everything under the sun, and the Lord chooses her. Nine times out of ten the Lord's choice is a perpetual astonishment to us, but He knows what He is about. He has always been the same, He is full of surprises. Matthew, a most despised and unpopular person, hated by all, yet the Lord calls him, and again, St. Augustine, going the pace on the high road to hell, and yet he becomes one of the greatest saints. As it was then, so it is now.

Some He calls in the very dawning of life ; scarce have they ended their school days 'ere His Spirit hastens them to the cloister, indeed, often have they heard the voice of His calling long before their school days were ended, and the world says they are much too young, not old enough to know their own minds, but they do know it. They have

cast but one glance on the things of time and it has been more than enough ; as one called very early in life said : "I looked only once at the world and never wished to see it again." Others He calls after long years in the world, but He has His own time for each one, some He calls early, some late, He determines the moment of their calling as surely as He determines their calling.

He has work for those to do whom He calls to His service in this place ; the Apostolate of souls, He wants you to have that thirst for their salvation that He had. He endured that thirst in the blackness and torment of Calvary because He was on fire for souls : "I have a baptism to be baptized, and how am I straightened till it be accomplished ! " His thirst for our redemption straightened Him and hastened Him to Calvary. The lovers of the Lord must become like Him, they too must be consumed with this burning thirst for souls. How wonderful He is, for He says to you : "Greater works than these shall ye do," and how amazingly He has verified it. The Lord's shadow did not cure anyone, yet St. Peter's did, but of course it was the Lord in Him. He is in us to will and to do.

What a tremendous relationship is that into which we are brought with Him. We are His soldiers, His servants, but much more we are His lovers, and everything He has He shares with us as lovers always do. So because He has power we have power, our crying prevails because His crying prevailed ; when we plead He pleads too.

The wonder of this Apostolate of prayer is that nothing can stop it and nothing resist it. After all, if you try to argue with anyone and convince them of the truth, they can refuse to listen, they can refuse to enter a Catholic Church or read a Catholic book, or think about the supernatural at all ; but however they may hedge themselves in, the power of prayer will break through, and without their knowing why, grace touches them and the light of God streams in. When Dr. Pusey heard that Catholic religious were praying for the conversion of Cardinal Newman, he despaired of keeping him and he was right. Prayer prevailed.

You have your work of reparation and expiation. God alone knows how great is the need of it. Think of all the manifold outrages and blasphemies against God and His

Church every day, the miserable apostates, those who have been consecrated to Him have turned from Him as Judas did before. In the full light of God's grace we wonder how any soul can forget Him. But alas, we have seen stars fall from heaven, and there was one saint who, whenever he saw a prisoner going to execution said : "There go I, but for the grace of God." We may well make that saying our own when we hear of some ghostly apostacy. There are some of whom, alas, the Lord says : "It were better for that man that he had never been born."

So what a work you have to do. You must be both the adorers and the consolers of His Divine Heart. Tyburn is always a consolation to the Heart of our King.

Then there is a wonderful active apostolate that has gathered round Tyburn. Souls broken and suffering souls, hungering and thirsting in a wonderful way, stream in without the least expectation. It is the attracting power of prayer, and they roll up to you here, just as they rolled up to Him when He was on earth. They knew His loving, compassionate Heart, they knew He would understand, they were sure that, however unwelcome they might be to others, there was a welcome for them with Him, and so the most extraordinary people gathered round the Lord.

They come to you for the same reason that they came to Him, they know you are at least the reflection of Him, and that they will find something of the wideness of His compassion in you. Souls who are frozen are drawn by this fire of love burning at Tyburn, and they draw warmth from its burning. So, dear sisters, be as wide as the Love of God, the closer you draw to His Divine Heart the bigger and wider will be the reach of your love ; the deeper and more profound your pity and compassion. Your love must be as big as your Lord's and embrace *all* the earth. Some think they will labour just for one little corner of the vineyard of the Lord. He does not want that for He is not like that. No, there must be no narrowness, our love must be wide as the Heart of God—embrace every soul and every land.

If the story of Tyburn and all that He has wrought here were told, how amazed and astonished the world would be.

What He wants is fidelity—fidelity to the least grace,

every call, every inspiration, every voice from Him speaking in our heart, to each and all let there be the most fervent response, and so, labouring for others, we save our own souls. "He that saveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life shall find it." It is only by losing that we find, and how very much we fear losing. The more utterly stripped we are of everything, the more utterly and entirely abandoned to His good pleasure, the more we become a fit instrument for His use.

He wants you to become a living flame of love to Himself, and then you will be a living flame for souls too. As you look up to Him there hidden under that little white Host, you will be ravished out of yourself, and burn with the longing to bring souls to that Victim-Lord and He will use you, and, through you, grace will stream out from this place in ever-growing measure. You are pleading here and others are labouring outside, and your prayers are strengthening them, even as, just across there in the Park where the cross is uplifted and His servants are giving their testimony, their testimony is being strengthened by grace from this place. He is lifted up here and now, and souls are streaming in, some knowing nothing of this marvellous Sacramental life of His, and yet drawn all unknowing by His Presence, for though He is hidden beneath a showing so small and so weak, yet the little white Host veils "Him Who is the Lord of Hosts, strong and mighty in battle." So He draws by His Own Almighty power, and His grace streams forth in a resistless torrent that compels them to come in.

You share with your Lord in this glorious lifting up that is bringing light and life to the souls of men, and by uplifting you are satisfying the thirst of His Divine Heart and hastening the consummation of His Kingdom. Only in eternity shall we see the marvellous works that prayer has wrought.

Out on the French front there was a rough old Protestant soldier talking to a Catholic sergeant: "What's the use of prayer, I don't believe in it," said he. The next day both went into a very desperate battle, and, as it happened, both came out alive. The following day the old soldier met the sergeant and said: "Oh, sergeant, didn't I pray yesterday." "What?" said the sergeant, "Thought you didn't

believe in it!" "Ah!" said the other, "I believe in prayer right enough now, prayer's all right." In moments like that, the most unlikely discover the value of prayer, for it is the mightiest power in the world. We often think our reasoning faculties are tremendously important, but souls are not won by intellectual conviction, or the world would have been Catholic long since. True, you may reason people into the Church, but if you do they will most likely reason themselves out again. The most intellectual presentation of the Faith in the world may make no impression, sometimes you only waste your time over it, but if you get to prayer the work will be done.

I remember a very hard case, a lady who came to the parlour about the Faith, up at St. Francis Xavier's in Liverpool. The good Fathers spent hours explaining, and she was no nearer seeing her way than before. One day she came again and the Father who had seen her before met Fr. D.—— on the way down: "You might see what you can do with her," said he, "I have done my best and can make no impression." Fr. D.—— went in and spent an hour without making any progress. As she was going away, an idea struck him: "Would you mind doing me a favour by wearing this?" he said, producing a badge of the Sacred Heart. "Not in the least," said she, and with that departed. The next day she was back again to his great surprise, asking for him. "Was that a charm you gave me yesterday?" she said, when he came down to her. "No, why should you think so?" "Well," she said, "from the time I put that badge on, all my doubts vanished." Only the invocation, "Thy Kingdom come!" but grace had worked through it. That brings out the supernatural grace which transcends all our powers of reasoning. You may confound a person by argument, you can only convince him by prayer.

Have your great and glorious vocation ever before you, and never refuse anything your Lord asks of you. Be attentive to every inspiration, for sometimes the Spirit brings before us the peoples and the places and the individuals for whom we must pray, and when He does we must not fail to respond. Adoring, interceding, expiating in this triple way, you fulfil His work, the work for which He in His great Love has set you here.

CHAPTER XXV

THE FINAL CONSUMMATION OF ALL THINGS

We have traced the way of the soul in her life of Mystical Contemplation, up to that moment when she only awaits the breaking of the link that yet detains on earth 'ere she passes to the full consummation of her life in the face to face beholding of God in Heaven. So we speak now a little of those things which the Church calls the Last Things, Death, Judgment, Hell, and Heaven.

We speak of death under a variety of aspects. We speak of the privation of grace as the supernatural death of the soul, that "dead in trepasses and sin" of the Apostle.

Then there is the death to sin, by the incoming of supernatural grace: "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" "We are dead to sin but alive unto God."

Finally, there is corporal death, the separation of the soul from the body, which sets a term to our life in this world, that death which the soul eagerly and ardently desires, because it is only through the gate of death that she can come to the fulness of her life. As Walter Hylton says: "The beginning of this contemplation may be felt in this life, but the full perfection of it is reserved unto the bliss of heaven." So St. John of the Cross speaks of the soul's longing that her corporal death may be hastened: "The soul's desire is not to wait for the natural termination of her mortal life, because the violence of her love and the disposition she is in incline her with resignation towards the violent rupture of her natural life in the supernatural assaults of love." [1] She says (§ 35): "I pray for that Thou willest I should pray for, and for that Thou willest not, I pray not for—it evens seems I could not do it, neither does it enter into my mind to do so—and as my prayers are now more efficacious and reasonable in Thy sight, for they proceed from Thee, and Thou willest I

[1] *The Living Flame of Love*, Stanza i., § 33.

should so pray, and as I pray in the joy and sweetness of the Holy Ghost, and my judgment cometh forth from Thy Countenance, when Thou are pleased with my prayer and hearkenest to it—Break Thou the slender web of this life, that I may be able to love Thee hereafter with that fulness and abundance which I desire, without end for evermore." [1]

In like spirit St. Catherine of Siena addressed her last words on earth to her Lord: "Thou, O Lord, callest me, and I come to Thee, not through my merit, but through Thy mercy alone, which I ask of Thee in virtue of Thy Blood."

The day of our death is the most joyful day of our life, and if that seem strange and some conceive death as terrible, yet surely death is less terrible than life. It is true that in one sense it is terrible, for "sin entered the world and death by sin"; but death, corporal death, for the soul restored to her supernatural life, can have no terror, since it only brings her to the full consummation of that Eternal life which is already her possession even in this world.

Corporal death is all-embracing, not even our Blessed Lady was exempt from the Universal sentence; that death none of human kind can escape.

We never know when sister death will come for us, when we retire to rest at night, whether we shall see the morning, or when we arise in the morning whether we shall see the evening; at any moment, when, where and how we know not, death may come for us. We may make our passage with all the Sacraments and rites of the Church to help us, or without them, which it shall be depends on God's will. All that matters is, that we are ready when the call comes. The only preparation for death is life; if we live in the love and grace of God, we need have no anxiety as to the manner of our death. "It will be all right" whatsoever the way in which our sister comes for us. If we live in God's grace, we shall surely die in it. We have one overwhelming consolation about death, and it is this: God has chosen the place, the time, and the circumstances of our death and we know they are the most favourable for our safe passage to a glorious eternity. Death cannot come before He wills it, and when He wills it, nought can stay the coming.

There is only one note about death that makes it sad. Death separates those who love—at least as regards

[1] *The Living Flame of Love*, Stanza i., § 35.

visible presence; nothing can separate the Spirit of those who love in God, but corporal death does draw down a veil of separation between us.

Death is most important of all, because it determines our eternal destiny. There are only two possibilities about our state at that supreme moment, we either go out of this world in God's grace or out of it. "As the tree falls, so it lies," and it is because of this tremendous alternative, that death has such awful solemnity.

One thing I have remarked in the many death-beds I have attended is the absence of fear and dread, even in the case of those who in full health and strength had been filled with fear at the thought of death. There was a strange peace, even in the case of those in great pain, as one dear child said to me in the intensity of her agony: "Oh, Father, I am so happy." Again, those who had sinned very grievously yet reposed in tranquil confidence on the all compassionate mercy of God. No matter what the circumstances, He gave them His peace.

The most tragic death at which I have assisted was that of a boy sentenced to be shot out in France. I heard his Confession, gave him absolution and the Body of the Lord the evening before. He prepared for the moment with splendid dispositions, not a word of reproach against anyone, or against the sentence passed on him. "I am not afraid to die, Father, and I am glad I am a Catholic," were his last words as I left him in the evening. I asked Sister Teresa to obtain for the boy all the courage he needed for the ordeal of the morning, and very early I went to him. He was ready and waiting to receive his Lord for the last time, and walked to the place of execution without fear or faltering. He was placed against the wall. He recited with me the last prayers, "Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul," and then, when I stepped aside and the party presented their rifles, he said with great calmness: "Good-bye, Father," the rifles blended in one perfect volley, and his soul passed from earth to heaven. His splendid courage made a tremendous impression on all those who were present.

Heaven and the Blessed Face to Face Vision of our God is that to which our whole life is tending, and so we may

look with eager desire for the day that shall finish the work of grace in our souls and bring us to the fullness of our life in Him. That is quite another thing to desiring death because we are tired and weary of suffering; no, we may only desire it because it brings us to Him.

Swift on death follows judgment, because on the instant the soul has left her earthly tabernacle she appears before the Lord to receive the sentence of everlasting life or death. For the soul burning with love for her Lord, the joy of that first beholding overshadows all else, she is so sure of His mercy that she fears not His justice. But not all enter the presence of the Judge ravished with joy and love. Our Saviour has painted a wonderful picture of the different issue that may follow the soul's passage from time to eternity in the story of Dives and Lazarus. In time and in eternity their position is one of tremendous contrast. In time, one was appallingly rich and the other appallingly poor. There is nothing much to be said against Dives from this world's point of view. He was an eminently respectable member of society, he had a noble mansion, was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day, exactly as a great many most estimable people do to-day. I have no doubt he subscribed most liberally to the charities of the city, "did his friends well," and was altogether a most useful and respectable citizen. At the gate of his palace lay a poor beggar, by no means a pleasant sight for he was covered with sores, and no doubt the visitors remarked on the strange tolerance of their host in allowing such an offensive object so near the entrance to his house. The ancient Dives, then, has something in his favour, for at least he left the poor beggar alone, while his modern representative would have had him promptly removed by the police.

In the course of time Lazarus dies, and the visitors, seeing him no more, doubtless remarked: "Well, poor wretch, it is a good thing he has gone, he is well out of the way," and with that comforting reflection passed on. But although his going forth was so inexpressibly miserable from this world's point of view, it was inexpressibly glorious from that of the next, for the angels came and carried his soul to Abraham's bosom. So it was all right after all; poor, wretched

and stricken in this world, he had a triumphant entry into the next. And in the course of time Dives died also ; even the millionaire cannot live for ever. Of course there was a most impressive public funeral, and the various public bodies passed their resolutions expressing their sense of the great loss inflicted on the country by the passing of so distinguished a member from its midst, and he came to occupy that six feet by three of earth, which is common alike to the Prince and the beggar ; death levels all. But what a contrast is his condition in the other world ! He is buried in hell and there, being in torment, lifts up his eyes and beholds Lazarus resting in Abraham's bosom. In his agony he cries : " Father Abraham, command Lazarus to dip his finger in cold water and touch my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame." But Abraham answers him : " Son, remember thou hadst in thy life-time thy good things and Lazarus his evil things, and now he is comforted and thou art tormented. Besides, between us there is a great gulf fixed." Then Dives thinks of those left behind, and he says : " Send Lazarus to warn my brethren, lest they too come into this place of torment." And he is answered : " They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." And Dives replies : " Ah, but if one returned from the dead they would hear." And Abraham answers : " If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they listen though one returned from the dead." Yes, it is quite true, they would not hear even though one returned from the dead, but would merely try to explain away a fact so disquieting and upsetting and so opposed to their way of life, in the best way they could.

As it was then, so is it now. If men will not be convinced by the outstanding fact of God's Church witnessing to Divine Truth in the world, if they reject her claims and despise her teaching, neither would they heed if the dead returned to life to add their testimony to hers.

We see that immediately after death there is a judgment which determines the soul's destiny, and this judgment concerns her thoughts, her words and deeds. Her words, all of them, the good and the bad, the kind and the harsh, the irritable and the patient. A word is an extraordinary thing, there is first the mind-word, the unspoken-word, and then

there is the spoken word. Once a word is spoken it has passed beyond our control, it has taken wings, others have heard it and passed it on, and what it will do after it has left us we cannot even think. In this world evil is ever more evident than good, but hereafter there will be a true balance.

Her thoughts, for the Saviour only regards words in so far as they are the expression of thought: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." What we think, that we tend to become, speech is only the outward expression of thought. A sin in thought can be as deadly as a deed. All our thoughts, desires, and aspirations will be judged, the good and the ill. Every longing to serve our King, every desire for His glory, though never realised, will yet receive His reward.

Her deeds. Every deed, without exception, every good deed, every generous action, every patient bearing of injury, as well as every evil deed, every mean action, every unjust act, all shall be exactly recorded. God cannot be deceived, every secret of our heart is open to Him, for He shall judge the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

We are painting our judgment in this world, like an artist painting his picture, and every day we add something to it, till the last day of all when the picture is complete.

Every influence we exert on others, for good or ill, all the work we have striven to do yet failed to accomplish, all comes into the picture.

The Judge is God. How supremely consoling that we shall be judged by Him and not by man, for if man were going to judge us, how greatly we should fear! But God is the Judge, and we know that His mercy is over all His works, and that while His justice is infallible, His mercy is infinite. Man's judgment is nearly always as harsh as it is unjust. I was reading one day the life of a well-known person, written as the tribute of a friend. Well, I could only exclaim after reading it: "The Lord save me from a friend's tribute." God is absolute Justice, He will not incline more to one side than another, and His Justice will always be tempered by His mercy.

Again, we shall be judged as we have judged; if our judgments have been merciful, we shall have a merciful judg-

ment, for if we have been merciful, His mercy infinitely transcends ours; so there is the consoling and comforting side, even for the most imperfect. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

But there is another judgment, when the rush of time shall be stilled against the walls of eternity, a great day, the day of the Lord, when all souls shall gather re-united to their bodies for the great Assize. "What," you exclaim, "is not one judgment enough, surely at the worst we cannot be more than condemned?" But the full tale of all our good and ill shall only be complete at that day, for what we have done goes on spreading out like the circle on the pond long after we have run our course. Influence on influence. The thought is terrifying yet true.

But there is the supremely consoling side; not all the ripples are evil. St. Augustine set a vast amount of evil in motion before his conversion, but he set a still vaster amount of good in motion after it, and souls are mounting to heaven to-day helped by that great saint, and his work still goes on and will go on till the end of time. So God's elect who have lived their life for Him have set in motion powers that will operate long after death, "for their works do follow them."

What a tremendous day that will be when the Judge all-seeing, all-embracing, shall gather all before Him. A marvellous mystery, what He will do in that day is hidden, but He said to Mother Juliana: "I shall do a deed that shall make all to be well, but how I shall do it shall be hidden till that day in which I shall do it."

There will come an evening when the sun shall set behind these hills of time for the last time; people will be planning and buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage, and then there will come that amazing moment when all the activities of earth shall be stilled.

The Lord has shown the manner of His coming, and what shall go before it, for the Church, His Bride, His Mystical Body, must have her life conformed to His, and like Him she must have her Calvary. As time draws near its ending, the barriers between nations shall be broken down that the great International kingdom of anti-Christ may be established. With what swift rapidity they are being broken

down, in a way that, thirty years ago, seemed impossible. Apostates shall arise and deceive many, but they are only the heralds and the prophets of the great Apostate. Our Lord revealed to St. Hildegarde, in those marvellous revelations, the story of the Universal Apostacy of the last days. The kingdom of anti-Christ is only possible when by the breaking down of the barriers dividing the nations, and the gradual process of their unification, the world shall be made ready for His coming. The greater part of the Church will fall away, in the days of the great Apostacy. "For," says St. Paul, "let no man deceive you. There shall come first the Apostacy, that the man of sin may be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and is lifted up above that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself as if he were God."

After this Apostacy a persecution so fierce shall follow, that "unless those days had been shortened, no flesh should be saved"; there will be no country in which to shelter, as in all the persecutions that have gone before, no part of the earth that comes not under the sway of the anti-Christ. The daily sacrifice shall cease save in secret and the faithful remnant shall worship as at first, in the caves and holes of the earth. The Man of Sin shall be revealed and receive the adoration of the whole earth, whose coming is according to the working of Satan in all power and signs and lying wonders—lying wonders not because they are not wonders, but because witnessing to a lie—and in all seduction of iniquity to them that perish, because they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. Therefore God shall send them the operation of error to believe a lie, for they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their desires they shall heap to themselves teachers having itching ears, and will be turned away from the truth to be converted to fables.

The marvel of the days of anti-Christ is that, refusing to adore the God-Man, they shall pay their adoration to a creature in his place, and, turning from the truth, shall give greedy credence to every manifestation and showing that the evil spirit shall work amongst them.

The anti-Christ will be a great outstanding personality, summing up in himself the spirit that has been steadily

growing and spreading itself over the earth, that false deification of humanity, that crafty counterfeit of the true; the transition from the idea to the person will be easy.

The fire of persecution burns throughout the world. Enoch and Elias come and bear their witness and lay down their lives, and the triumph of the enemy seems complete. The sanctuaries are desecrated, the altars cast down, the voice of praise silenced, and the faithful remnant are hidden away, buried in the caves of the earth; the Bride seems indeed dead, and her enemies feel at last, that she will never rise again.

But in the supreme moment of their triumph comes that night when the notes of the last trumpet ring over the whole earth, and the blazing, fiery cross appears in the heavens, going before the Judge of the living and the dead. That kingdom, that seemed so strong, shall be crumpled up in a moment, and the great ones of the earth shall call upon the rocks to fall upon them, and the hills to cover them from the wrath of the Lamb, "for the great day of His wrath is come and who shall be able to stand?" The Bride will arise from her grave, the remnant of the faithful will come out of their holes, for their redemption is nigh. The moment when the Devil's triumph seemed most complete is the moment of his final and everlasting defeat.

The Saviour appears in all the unveiled splendour of His matchless glory, and His enemies fall stricken at His feet. The blood of the Saints comes up for vengeance, the balance sheets of time are cast up, the books are opened and the final reckoning completed.

That is the consummation for which all creation is in pain and travail, waiting for the redemption of the body.

That day will have no evening, there will be no second Vespers to the day of Eternity, that day in which God Himself will be the reward of His Elect.

CHAPTER XXVI

HEAVEN

Heaven and Hell—the great alternative, for, terrible as it may seem, there is an alternative to Heaven, there is the blackness of the everlasting darkness, as well as the brightness of the everlasting light, and just because it is terrible we must not refuse to behold it.

There is a place where souls are for ever deprived of the Vision of God, a place where they share with the rebel angels the eternal consequence of their aversion from Him. No souls enter that outer darkness, save those who have chosen it; the lake of fire was prepared, not for man, but for the Devil and his angels, and they of humankind who have part in it have not that part without its being their own free and deliberate choice. Just as the essential glory of Heaven is the face to face Vision of God, so the essential torment of hell is the privation of it. Who shall enter this place of torment? Are they many or are they few? That is hidden in the Divine Counsels—but this we know, God does not send souls to hell; they send themselves there. The All-merciful Saviour Himself has declared its nature and its existence in words that cannot be denied, and, fearful as may be its contemplation, it cannot be robbed of its dread reality by our refusing to believe it. The war was almost inconceivable in its dreadful suffering, but it was not diminished by refusing to believe in the horror of it, the agony of it, the fearsome reality of it.

The soul united to the Divine Heart, whose whole life here below has been lived for her Lord and Lover, awaits with eager impatience her entrance into the heavenly country, where at last all the fiery longings of her heart shall be satisfied, and the King she so loves be her everlasting portion; there she beholds, lives and possesses in the splendid fulness of the Beatific Vision.

The glory of Heaven is this face to face Vision, compared with that, every other shewing seems almost as nothing. Even lovers on earth find a joy in beholding that is like nothing else in the joy of it, the gladness of it, the very ecstasy of it. A photograph, a letter, a voice on the telephone: yes, they are all precious to the one who loves, but they are altogether nothing compared to the face to face beholding.

St. Thomas Aquinas was often revolving in his mind this question of the Vision of God, and, towards the close of his life, one day a brother whom he had left behind in Paris, suddenly appeared beside him. Astonished at his presence, Thomas said to him: "Brother, from whence art thou come?" The Brother replied: "I am with God," and Thomas, feeling at once that here was the opportunity to clear up his doubts, exclaimed: "Now, Brother, since you are with God, tell me, in the heavenly fatherland do we behold God face to face or through a medium?" And the Brother made answer: "As we have heard, so have we *seen* in the city of our God," and vanished from his sight. So St. Thomas knew from that answer that in the heavenly land no medium, however transparent, comes between the soul and her God, but that she beholds Him face to face as He is in His own Divine Self. For in truth Heaven could scarce be Heaven if that face to face vision were denied. True, we cannot, owing to the weakness of our sight, behold the sun shining in his strength, for the weakness of our seeing, overwhelmed by his shining, only beholds blackness where there is splendid light, and so some have wondered how the white shining of God's Eternal Majesty could be beheld in the fulness of His splendour, and the human beholder not blinded by the shining. But He Who would Himself be the reward of His Elect shall bestow upon them a power of seeing, of such strength that the soul shall behold God and not be overpowered by the sight; He shall give her that light of glory of which His prophet has spoken: "In Thy Light shall we see light."

Ruysbroeck speaks thus of our seeing in Heaven: "We shall behold with our inward eye the mirror of the Wisdom of God, in which shall shine and be illumined all things

which have ever existed and can rejoice our hearts. And we shall hear with our outward ears the melody and the sweet songs of saints and angels who shall praise God for evermore . . . We shall understand by love and we shall be understood by love and God shall possess us and we Him in unity. We shall enjoy God, and united to Him shall rest in blessedness. And this measureless delight in that super-essential rest is the ultimate source of blessedness, for we are then swallowed up in satisfaction beyond all possibility of hunger."

What less than this face to face beholding can ever satisfy the soul, longing as she does with inexpressible longing to attain it? The lover on earth is consoled by a letter, comforted by a photograph that images the lover, yet never satisfied with these, while the visible presence is denied; although they are all tokens of love, they are not the lover, and each one only accentuates rather than diminishes, the ardent longing for the face to face reunion.

Two souls separated by land and sea through long years, draw nigh their re-uniting, and the fateful, long expected, impatiently awaited day comes at last, and in a tumult of emotions that may not be expressed, on the platform the one awaits the other, the eyes fixed with eager watchfulness on the incoming train to catch the first glimpse of that other so long separated, so ardently loved, so passionately desired. The vision of love is wonderfully keen, and the moment comes when these two, clasped in each other's arms in a very ecstasy of joy unutterable, are simply oblivious of all that is passing around them, they have no eyes, no sight, no hearing for anyone else. All the long weary years of separation are forgotten in the rapture of that reunion. They see, they love . . they possess.

But great and wonderful a thing as is the joy of earth in possession of its love, it is ever shadowed with the fear of loss, although, in those wonderful moments when time seems to stand still, everything else is forgotten in the unutterable joy of it. There is no joy on earth without its undertone of sadness, since the soul knows only too well the insecurity and the uncertainty of all the joys of time. But there is no sorrow mixed with the joy of that beholding

of our Love in Heaven, for nothing can ever come between our soul and Him for evermore. All the eager longing of the soul in her life on earth here finds its full fruition, she possesses her God for ever and for ever, He is hers for evermore, and she is His, held fast in the embrace of Everlasting Love.

God, speaking to St. Catherine of Siena of the joys of Heaven, said: "She always desires Me and loves Me, and her desire is not in vain—being hungry she is satisfied, and being satisfied she has hunger, but the tediousness of satiety and the pain of hunger are far from her. In Love the Blessed rejoice in My eternal vision, participating in that good that I have in Myself, everyone according to his measure, that is with that measure of love with which they come to Me is measured to them. Because they have lived in love of Me and of the neighbour, united together with the general love and the particular, which both proceed from the same love. And they rejoice and exult, participating in each other's good with affection of love besides the universal good they enjoy together. And they rejoice and exult with the angels with whom they are placed according to their desires and various virtues in the world, being all bound in the bonds of love. And they have a special participation with those whom they closely loved with particular affection in the world, with which affection they grew in grace, increasing in virtue, and the one was the occasion of manifesting to the other the glory and praise of My Name in themselves and in their neighbour, and in the everlasting life they have not lost this love, but have it still, participating closely, with more abundance the one with the other, their love being added to the Universal good, and I would not that thou shouldst think that they have this particular good, of which I have told thee for themselves alone, for it is not so, but it is shared by all the heavenly citizens, My beloved sons, and all the angels, for, when the soul arrives at eternal life, all participate in the good of that soul and the soul in their good. . . They see that, by My mercy, she is raised from the earth to that plenitude of grace, and therefore they rejoice in Me in the good of that soul, which good she has received through My goodness. And that soul

rejoices in Me and in the saints and blessed spirits, seeing and tasting in them the beauty and sweetness of My love. And their desires all cry out to Me for the salvation of the whole world.

"And since their life ended in the love of their neighbour, they have not left it behind, but with it have passed through the Door, My sole-begotten Son. So thou seest that in those bonds of love, in which they ended this life, they remain everlastingly. They are so conformed to My Will, that they can only desire what I desire, because their free will is bound in the bond of love in such wise that time failing them and dying in My grace, they cannot sin any more. . . Think not that the bliss of the body after the resurrection gives more bliss to the soul, for, if it were so, it would follow that until they had the body, they had imperfect bliss, but this is not so, since no perfection is lacking to this. So it is not the body that gives bliss to the soul but the soul to the body, because the soul will give of her abundance and re-clothe herself in the Last Day in the garments of her own flesh which she had quitted. For as the soul is made immortal, stayed and stablished in Me, so the body in that union becomes immortal, and having lost heaviness, becomes fire and light. Wherefore know that the glorified body can pass through a wall, and that neither fire nor water can injure it, not by virtue of itself, but by virtue of the soul, which virtue is of Me, granted her by grace, and by the ineffable love with which I created her to My Image and Likeness. . . I told thee of the happiness which the glorified body would take in the glorified Humanity of My only-begotten Son, which gives you assurance of your resurrection . . . they are all conformed with Me in joyousness and mirth, and you will all be conformed with Him, eye with eye, and hand with hand, and with the whole Body of the Sweet Word, My Son, and dwelling in Me you will dwell in Him because he is one with Me."

God has so fashioned the soul that she could never rest in her exile on earth; that union begun there, those moments of wonderful vision only quickened her with the more ardent and irresistible desire for the eternal possession of Himself. Although the soul, even on earth

after she has entered on her mystic marriage state, is thus one with God, that she is herself God by participation, though not as perfectly as she will be in Heaven, for the soul, by reason of her transformation being a shadow of God, effects through God in God, what He effects within her Himself by Himself, because the will of both is one. And as God is giving Himself with a free and gracious will, so the soul also, with a will the more free and generous, the more she unites with God in God, is, as it were, giving back to God—in that loving complacency with which she regards the Divine Essence and perfection—God Himself. He receives this gift of the soul as if it were her own, and in that gift He loves anew and gives Himself to her, and the soul also loves Him anew. Thus there is in fact a new exchange of love between the soul and God in the conformity of their union, and in the matrimonial surrender, wherein the goods of both, that is the Divine Essence, are possessed by both together in the voluntary giving up of each to the other, "yet the soul desires the full fruition which she can only enjoy in the clear vision of eternity."

In that most glorious and blessed vision, faith is swallowed up in sight, the soul no longer beholds Him she loves through the dark night of faith, but in the cloudless splendour and fadeless glory of the Face to Face Vision. The soul, ravished out of herself, as she has been so often on earth by the least showing of His glory, here looks upon His shining in all its unveiled splendour, and is filled with the most sweet and tranquil joy at the sight. She is held fast for ever in the wonderful manifestation of her God, One and Three, where no medium can ever intervene between herself and Him.

But Heaven is also the possession of God, for Hope is swallowed up in fruition. Hope gives place to possession, and possession so full, so absolute and so complete that nothing is wanting to the perfection of it, the everlastingness of it. Every possession on earth has the possibility of loss, the lovers clasped in each other's arms dread the possibility of separation even in the joy of possession, the child grips the mother and holds her tight for the same reason, the dread of separation. But the blessed and glorious and everlasting possession of our God in Syon

knows no shadow, is stricken with no fear, chilled by no foreboding, for that possession is such that it can never be severed. It is the very transformation, in all its utter and entire completeness, of the soul into the Divinity, so that her very acts are all Divine and the very love with which she loves is His love in her. The possession is the participation of the soul in the very life of God.

She is deified. It is the great possession.

Finally, Love remains. While faith gives place to sight, hope to fruition, Love never fails, Love never ends. The soul has been overwhelmed, even in time, with the torrent of Divine Love, but full and great as that tide has been, it is as nothing compared to the Love of Eternity. St. Thomas, when he recovered from his last ecstacy, exclaimed: "In the sight of what I have seen, all that I have written seems as nothing," and that, after all, was but a foretaste of the glory to come.

The soul is swallowed up in love, her whole life is love, she looks and loves, is satisfied and never satiated, love has reached its consummation, because she loves Him with love worthy of Himself, since He is in her and she in Him with perfect oneness of vision, oneness of possession, and oneness of love, to the fullest extent of which she is capable. That is the essential glory of Heaven—the seeing, the possessing and the loving of God.

But besides the essential glory of the face to face vision of God, One and Three, there is the vision of the glorified Humanity of our King, the Lamb as it were slain, and the soul caught up in that rapturous adoration sings the new song: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive Power and Divinity, and Wisdom and Strength and Honour and Glory and Benediction." Who shall describe the music that swells through the heavenly courts, as the voice of many waters, from all the ransomed host of God?

There is the Throne of God and the Lamb, and there, too, is Our Blessed Lady, the martyrs' King, the glorious company of the Apostles, the white-robed Army of Martyrs, the choir of Virgins and Confessors, the vast multitude that no man can number out of every kindred and nation and tribe and people under heaven, all filled

with the joy of one common love and one common adoration, for one the heart and one the joy of all that throng. Each rejoicing in the other's beatitude, for the very joy of one is the joy of all, their love is one, their joy is one, their heart is one, their voice is one, their praise is one, for they sing the praises of the Lamb Who was slain and has redeemed them in His Own Blood. And joy of all joys, it can never cease; it is the great everlasting *NOW*. Time with its change and shadow of variations has passed as though it had never been; in that great eternity change can never come.

Thither we look up in this land of exile, and sigh with eager longing for that day when we shall enter in through the gates, into the City where God Himself shall wipe away all tears from off all faces, "where there shall be no more death nor mourning nor crying nor sorrow any more, for the former things have passed away." All our sufferings and many tribulations, all our contradictions, all our crosses will seem as nothing in the light of that day. It is worth struggling for, it is worth fighting for, it is worth everything, if only we may come to the glory of that face to face vision, in the light of which we shall indeed know that the sufferings of time were not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

If we have suffered with Him, we shall also reign with Him, there will come a day when the children of time shall become the heirs of eternity.

When the children of Israel were smitten by the serpents in the desert, they were bidden to look at the brazen serpent Moses set up, and they that looked, lived. So is it that we live by looking at our Crucified King. Contemplation is looking at God, not reasoning about Him, and when we love, our joy is not in reasoning, but in beholding. So the perfect contemplation of Heaven is this beholding of our God in His unveiled splendour. O! the glory of that never-changing, moveless eternity, in which there is no part to which we look back, no present that is passing, no future that is coming, but only the eternal, ever-present *NOW*.

That is the Day of Eternity, to which all the days that are passing are a preparation, that will be our great

reward and everlasting portion—God, His very Self, and nothing less than Himself, and when we see Him we shall be like Him.

"Blessed are they that are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb."

"I go to prepare a place for you." These are the words He addresses to the soul. But most astoundingly wonderful of all is His gracious promise that He Himself will come to meet her.

How eagerly at our home-coming from France did we look for the sight of loved ones awaiting us, but think that He, the Lover of our souls, is not sending His Saints to welcome us, but He has given His own blessed promise, "I will come again and receive you to Myself."

That is Heaven, to be received into the Eternal, Everlasting Embrace of God.

CHAPTER XXVII

LAST WORDS

All things come to an end here below, even a retreat, for all things are passing and only God is Eternal. We make our retreat to find out what more He wants of us, to strive to know and love Him a little better at its ending than at its beginning, to enter more completely into His Divine Heart and become more fully one spirit with Him.

Love made us, love keeps us, love will perfect us. The beginning and ending of all is love. The longer we live, the greater grows the wonder of His great Love for us, we see more of our own imperfections, and yet we see too the ever-increasing, ever-growing manifestation of His Love. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." How well we know the truth of it. His Love has followed us all our days, even when we went away from Him that Love brought us back again, that Love has directed every happening of our life, that Love has set us here and bestowed upon us a glorious vocation. And, if we love Him, we shall love each other in Him, not in any human way, but in the Divine way we have learned of Him. "Love one another as I have loved you," is His New Commandment, and the Apostle of His Divine Heart says: "We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren." That is the test of our love for Him, and, of course, if we love Him, we must love all He loves. So this love must unite you all in a wonderful unity, each Sister will love the other in the Divine way in which He has loved her. Love unites, and unity is essential in a community, and if you are all united to Him, you will all be united to each other. The uniting power of love, even natural, is marvellous, but it is nothing compared to that of Divine Love.

So, dear Sisters, see that you love our dear Lord in each other, underneath whatever imperfections you may behold.

Each Sister here has been brought here by the Lord Himself, and so you must love because He loves; and what a glorious, marvellous unity of love there will be, if you all love each other as He wants you to do. Love is blind, it does not see the faults but only the virtues in the object of its love. Love covers a multitude of sins, yes, it hides the faults it sees, draws a veil over them, does not tear open the wound but strives to heal it. Where this love exists there is unity, when it goes there is division, for love alone can produce true unity. You may have a false unity through fear, you can only have a true unity through love.

I often think the cloister is very like a hospital, where the patients are all in various degrees of recovery. Some are very advanced in the ways of God, and others only beginning, all are striving to become perfect; they have not already attained it: if they had they would be in Heaven and not here.

Our own sanctification is only wrought through Love, and if we dwell in Love we dwell in God and He in us, and, so dwelling, we shall bear all the little irritations of our daily life with joy; often some little thing gets on our nerves more easily than a big thing, even the rattling of a rosary—as little Sister Teresa found out—so she offered it to Our Lord and then it became sweet music to her ears. That is the way with love, it transforms, it renews, it quickens, and it altogether changes our view of everything.

If we love and we see a Sister with some defect, we shall simply go to the Lord our Lover, and say to Him: "Well, Lord, here is this Sister and she has this defect, it is ever the same, but Lord, you must change it, for after all she is Your lover too." If we pray and tell Him everything, He will work wonders.

Let the common love rise up from this place with the absolute singleness of one heart, let our love be as wide as His Divine Heart, let us avoid every narrowness, never allow ourselves to get concentrated on our own little corner to such an extent as to forget the others; let us rejoice in the success and works of others, pray for our King to bless each Sister in her work for His glory; rejoice

at every little success by whomsoever attained ; every little advance of His interests as much, nay more, than if it were our own. God calls us to love others more than ourselves, because we are to love like Him, and when He gave the commandment He shewed how we were to keep it : " Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

How amazingly wonderful was the love that quickened those first Christians, so much so that the very pagans said : " Behold, how they love one another," and certainly, that was not because they were all perfect ; they were widely different in the degree of sanctity they had attained, in their social station and relations, in fact in every way, yet the mighty unity of love overcame all, and bound them together in its strong and unbreakable bands : one in Him they were one in each other.

So Tyburn must be a great love-centre, a place where love has free course, and where all are upheld and bound together by its matchless unity, then you will all be in touch with each other, because the closer you are to each other the closer you will be to God.

Above all else the unity of love, that love-spirit by which each one strives to help the other on the way. That was wonderfully shown out in France. A man staggers under his load, and another, as heavily burdened as he, steps forward, stretches out his hand to take the rifle and says : " Here, give it to me." I have seen a man carrying two rifles besides his own ; that was the spirit at the front, a most wonderful readiness to help. Never let the spirit of criticism find entrance amongst you ; a critical spirit drives away grace and dries up love. Love and criticism cannot dwell together. You see a soul full of criticism and you see a soul from which the love of God has fled. If ever the Devil puts the criticism of a Sister into your heart, dash it against that rock which is Christ. As St. Benedict says, never give way to a grumbling or complaining spirit : when it's time to grumble it's time to go. One discontented, complaining person can infect a whole community, it is more infectious than the measles, and infinitely more deadly. So watch the very first sign of criticism or fault-finding, and crush it out of your heart.

Never be down on a Sister, be the matter what it may. You cannot tell what a brave struggle she put up before she failed, or how many times she has "won through," for the one failure you have seen. You know we feel it very hard in our own case if someone comes down on us like a thousand of bricks, especially if we have been trying to do our best all the time. Now, dear Sisters, remember our Blessed Lord will never let us down.

Sometimes at the front a young officer would get into a difficult position by some unwise move, but he had to be helped out in the best way possible; no one was going to let him down. And Our Lord Who loves us a million times more than anyone else can, will never let us down. We may make mistakes and bad ones, too, but He in His wonderfully, loving, compassionate way will see us through and "make all to be well."

Dear Sisters, let us keep liberty of spirit, that blessed liberty and simplicity of spirit wherewith Christ has made us free. You know how the child comes flying into the arms of the mother, it does not spend ten minutes reflecting on how it should enter, because love is too eager for that, and it is caught in the mother's embrace; she does not send it out that it may make a more dignified entrance. God loves us with more than the mother's love; He Himself has told us so.

There is a blessed freedom in the intercourse between the soul and her Lover that is as far removed from the cold rigidity of Jansenism as the heavens are from the earth.

I looked in a Church in London one day and saw a notice on the door that Holy Communion would be given out of Mass, but that those using the privilege must spend fifteen minutes in preparation and fifteen minutes in thanksgiving. I pitied the poor work girls who had been granted such a favour. What a blessing it is that Our Lord is so different and so unconventional. I am sure that if some people had their will, the way to heaven would be closed to all but a very select few.

That is why I love Italy: it does one good to see their liberty of spirit; the Church is the Father's Home, and the children are always welcome. In some Churches the people are all praying aloud, each in their own way, and

the priest's voice is drowned in the soaring voice of petition; it is all very unconventional, but I am sure Our Lord is very pleased with it. Some souls say the most daring things to Our Lord because they love much, for love is daring, they ask the most impossible things, and He gives them, just because of their love.

Live in the spirit of sacrifice; sacrifice is love manifesting itself, and love must find a way to manifest itself, it cannot be held in, it breaks through every obstacle.

So, on this glorious spot where your Lord has brought you to labour with Him in the redemption of souls, everything inspires you with the spirit of sacrifice, for here the Martyrs made their glorious sacrifice in union with their King. Here He was uplifted again and glorified in their passion. Those who love will also sacrifice, because they must show their love, and every sacrifice is delightful to love, because love makes the greatest burden light, and there is a delight in bringing to our Love that which has cost us something.

It may be He will leave us sometimes in the darkness. Well, what does it matter? Darkness is light with Him. He is living and suffering in us, and if He suffers in us, be sure there will be splendid fruit of it, and the magnificent apostolate of Tyburn must be perfected, like all His works, by suffering.

There are times when He does not speak and all is silent; but remember, we are lovers, and lovers can spend hours together without saying anything, the presence is all they want. So it is with us, we have Him and He has us, and that is everything. We are just glad to be in His Presence, and He is glad we are there.

So, dear Sisters, spend yourselves in the love and service of your King, in your triple work here at Tyburn—Adoration, Intercession, Expiation—burnt out, consumed as the wax and wick of the candle in giving light, and then your King Himself will grant you a glorious and triumphant entry to the Kingdom He has prepared for you before the foundation of the world.

APPENDIX

In connection with Chapter XIX. the following particulars may be of interest :—

Associazione delle Vittime per la Santa Chiesa.—The Association of those who offer themselves as victims for Holy Church.

Article I.—The Association is established at the Convent of the Little Company of Mary, Rome. (*Piccola Compagnia de Maria, via San Stefano Rotondo* 6).

Article II.—The end of the Association is to gather together under the protection of the Maternal Heart of Mary, devout persons of both sexes, in order that they may dedicate themselves the more completely and entirely to the interests of the Church and the Vicar of Jesus Christ, by their prayers, works and sufferings, offering for that end all the pains both of soul and body which may befall them.

Article III.—The Spirit of the Association is essentially that of Calvary. The Victims must watch and pray at the foot of the Cross, in union with the sorrowful heart of Mary, knowing that as they share the ignominy and Passion of her Divine Son, upon that Sacred Mount, so they will one day participate in His Glory. Their whole life, therefore, every thought, every word, every action must be united to the most perfect Oblation of the Supreme Victim, so that they can say, in truth, "I am crucified with Christ."

Article IV.—In Rome, the Association will have a director, nominated by His Eminence the Cardinal Vicar.

Article V.—As it is necessary that those who enrol themselves in the Association should fully know the spirit and the effects of the offering which they make to our Lord, no one will be admitted before they have completed their fifteenth year, and after having given proof of understanding the spiritual importance of the act which they are about to make.

Article VI.—Those who are admitted by the Director to form part of this Association will spend a period of time, to be fixed by him, in prayer and recollection. When this period is past they will hear Holy Mass, and after having received Holy Communion, will read the Act of Consecration, and receive from the priests' hands the blessed ring, with the motto, "Pro pontifice et Ecclesia." symbol of the offering which they have made of themselves to our Lord. This Act of Consecration will be renewed on each anniversary of the first Offering.

Article VII.—Practices of the Association. 1. The Victims aim above all at their own greater perfection in the exact fulfilment of their daily duties. 2. They will also perform special practices of piety and mortification under the direction of their Confessor. 3. In every work, undertaking or enterprise, they will place the interest of the Church before their own individual interests. 4. In imitation of Him, Who went about everywhere doing good, they will devote themselves to the salvation and sanctification of their neighbour, and particularly to those of their own family.

ACT OF CONSECRATION.

O my God, I offer myself a victim of holocaust to Thine outraged Justice and to Thy merciful Love, to suffer in my body and in my soul whatever Thou shalt will, whenever Thou shalt will and for as long as Thou shalt will, in expiation and reparation for the grievous offences and many outrages committed against Thee by sinful man. I offer myself, hidden in union with the one great, All-sufficient Sacrifice which was offered to Thee on Calvary by Thine Only Begotten Son. To His merits I unite all my acts and sufferings, well knowing that of myself, I can do nothing. Look not upon me, Eternal Father, and upon my poor sacrifice, but look upon Thy Son, in Whom Thou art ever well-pleased. In accepting Him, accept me, for I live and am hidden in Him. O my God, may He suffer in me, and I in Him.

O Jesus, as Thou canst not now bear again the sins of men in Thine own Divine Person, deign, I beseech Thee, to bear them in me. Come, Lord, and suffer in me, Thy sinful creature, who only wishes to be Thy loving little Victim.—*Amen.*

Basilius Diaconis S. Mariae in Domnica S.E.R. Cardinalis Pompili S. Smi. D. N. Papae Vicarius Generalis Romanae Curiae eiusque Districtus Judex Ord; occ:

Piam Chritefidelium Consociationem sub nomine Victimarum pro Ecclesia qui namque seipsos labores et poenas offereunt Deo pro Ecclesia Christi, in sacello Sororum Parvae Societatis Mariae Romae ad Coelium Montem degentum praesenti decreto Auctoritate nostra Ordinaria erigimus et erectum esse pronuntiamus: eiusque leges, huic decreto adnexas septem articulos comprehensas adprobamus, servata nobis et Sucessoribus nostris faciltate eas immutandi quoties opportunum visum fuerit.

Datum Romae ex Aedibus Vicariatus die 27 mensis januarii, 1914.

B. Card: Vicarius.
F. Can: Pascucci, Secretarius.

Praesens exemplar concordat cum originali in Archivo huius Vicariatus adservata. Romae, die 30 mensis januarii, 1914.

(Signed) F. Pascucci, secretàrius.

Chapter IV., p. 32.—"The light from the nearest stars takes nigh two thousand years to reach the earth," should read "days" for "years."

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